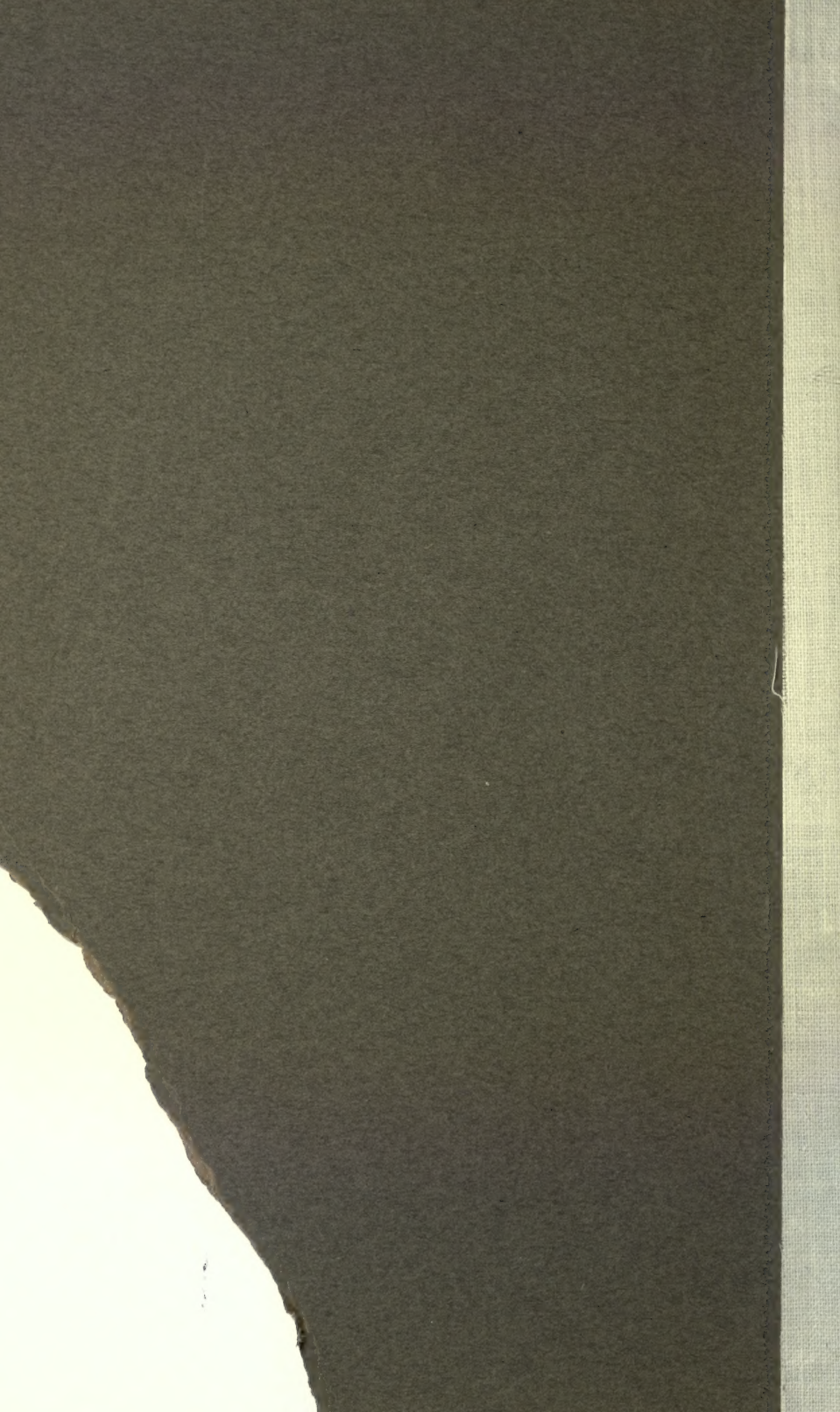


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Selections from the letters  
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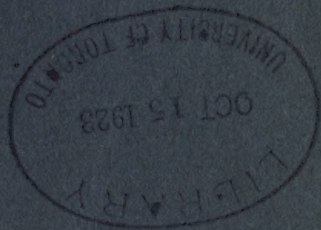
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SELECTIONS FROM THE  
LETTERS AND DIARIES OF BREVET-BRIGADIER  
GENERAL WILLOUGHBY BABCOCK OF  
THE SEVENTY-FIFTH NEW  
YORK VOLUNTEERS

A STUDY OF CAMP LIFE IN THE UNION  
ARMIES DURING THE CIVIL WAR



By  
WILLOUGHBY M. BABCOCK JR

*Issued by the Division of Archives and History*  
*War of the Rebellion Series*  
*Bulletin 2*

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

1922

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October 13, 1922.

*Dr Frank P. Graves*  
*President of the University*

DEAR SIR:

I herewith transmit and recommend for publication the *Selections from the Letters and Diaries of Brevet Brigadier General Willoughby Babcock of the 75th New York Volunteers* (a study of camp life in the Union armies during the Civil War), by Willoughby M. Babcock jr. This constitutes Bulletin 2 of our War of Rebellion Series, the first bulletin having been that of Colonel Burt's *Memoirs*, published in 1903.

This Division for many years past has devoted so much of its attention to the colonial and revolutionary periods of our history that other periods have been neglected. With this study of Mr Babcock's it is hoped to resume our activities in other periods of New York State's history. Mr Babcock has in his possession some two hundred letters of his grandfather and it is from these that he has made this interesting study on camp life, about which so little has been known.

Very truly yours

JAMES SULLIVAN

*State Historian and Director*

*Approved for publication*

FRANK PIERREPONT GRAVES

*President of the University and  
Commissioner of Education*



## PREFACE

In reading over the collection of letters written during the Civil War by Brevet Brigadier General Willoughby Babcock of the Seventy-fifth New York Volunteers, my grandfather, I was much impressed by the wealth of detail about army life which they contain. Their author was constantly undergoing new experiences, and in everyday fashion he wrote about them to his wife. For her benefit he told what the soldiers ate, how they trained, what their amusements were, and many other details, but he carefully avoided frightening her with accounts of the fierce fighting through which the Seventy-fifth New York passed.

Various circumstances have made it inadvisable to edit and publish his letters and diaries in full at the present time, but an attempt has been made in this work to make available the greater part of the material contained in them and to retain as far as possible the words and attitude of mind of the writer.

WILLOUGHBY M. BABCOCK JR

*October 1922*



## CONTENTS

	PAGE
Preface . . . . .	5
1. Introduction . . . . .	11
2. Camps and fortifications . . . . .	16
3. Commissary . . . . .	38
4. Camp life . . . . .	44
Routine . . . . .	44
Picket and guard duty . . . . .	47
Scouting service and reconnoissance . . . . .	53
Marches . . . . .	56
5. Transportation . . . . .	64
6. Organization . . . . .	69
Troops (personnel) . . . . .	69
Equipment . . . . .	81
Expenses . . . . .	82
Pay . . . . .	85
Discipline . . . . .	87
7. Recreation and mail . . . . .	92
8. The "contraband" question . . . . .	100
9. Feeling concerning the war . . . . .	105



## ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
Lieutenant Babcock and noncommissioned officers . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
View of Fort McHenry, Baltimore . . . . .	20
View of Bluffs at Port Hudson, fronting on the river taken from the citadel of rebel fortifications . . . . .	32
View of the rebel gun Alabama and battery fronting on the river, Port Hudson, La. . . . .	32
View of large gun (9-inch bore) on river front near to the S.S. Landing, Port Hudson, La. . . . .	32
View of parapet of rebel Priest Cap, showing central sap opposite Cox's battery, Port Hudson, La. . . . .	32
View of Priest Cap, showing lines of our sap, etc., approaching thereto, Port Hudson, La. . . . .	32
View of rebel Priest Cap, showing stakes planted by the Con- federates to obstruct a night attack, Port Hudson, La. . . . .	32
View of Priest Cap rebel works, Port Hudson, La. . . . .	32
View of 19 gun battery (ours) taken from the citadel (Reb), showing the ditch and holes used by the Confederates at the citadel, Port Hudson, La. . . . .	32
View of rebel battery, opposite to Capt. Bainbridge's battery on our right of line, Port Hudson . . . . .	32
View of a section of Priest Cap rebel works, showing holes used by Confederates as huts during the siege of Port Hudson . . . . .	32
View of rebel gun opposite Holcrom's battery, Port Hudson, La. . . . .	32
General Banks . . . . .	74

## PLATES

A regimental camp . . . . .	28
Formation of a regiment (ten companies) in line of battle, show- ing the position of officers, etc. . . . .	33





SELECTIONS FROM THE LETTERS AND DIARIES OF  
BREVET-BRIGADIER GENERAL WILLOUGHBY  
BABCOCK

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this discussion of various phases of camp life in the Union armies, during the Civil War, conditions are presented from the viewpoint of a volunteer officer, Lieutenant Colonel Willoughby Babcock of the Seventy-fifth New York Volunteers, as shown by letters written to his wife from the field. These letters, of which there are about two hundred, cover the period from January 1860 to October 6, 1864, when Colonel Babcock died from the effects of a wound received in the Battle of Winchester, Virginia, September 19, 1864. These letters naturally fall into twelve groups according to the place from which they are written.

The first group, consisting of thirty-six letters written during the period from January 1860 to the middle of April 1861, contains no material bearing on the topic. The second group contains fifteen letters written from Albany and New York while the regiment, the Third New York, was being organized and drilled preparatory to leaving for the front. The series closes May 30, 1861, when the force was ordered to Fortress Monroe, Virginia. The next group of twenty letters covers the period June 6 to July 24, 1861, during which the regiment was at Camp Hamilton, near Hampton, Virginia, not far from Old Point Comfort, and was initiated into the hardships of army life in the field. Here it had its baptism of fire, also, during the Battle of Great Bethel, in which the Union force was defeated with some loss. July 24, 1861, the regiment was ordered to move, with full equipment and supply of ball cartridge, supposedly toward Richmond, but actually to Baltimore, where it became a support to the garrison of Fort McHenry, one of the river forts guarding the city. Seventeen letters were written from this place, dated July 29 to October 27, while Lieutenant Babcock was sick and discouraged over the disorganization of the regiment, which culminated in a mutiny August 15, 1861, when its three months of service was completed.

On November 2, 1861, the writer of these letters tendered his resignation as first lieutenant of Company H, Third New York Volunteers, and hurried home to assume the captaincy of a company of Cayuga county volunteers. With this company he was mustered into the Sixty-fourth New York Volunteer regiment, but, upon receiving an appointment as major in the Seventy-fifth New York, he severed his connection with the former regiment and reported for duty in the Seventy-fifth on December 2, 1861. The fifth group contains twenty-four letters, covering the period December 1, 1861, to May 9, 1862. Three of these were written from New York, while the rest were from Santa Rosa Island, Florida, where the regiment was encamped near Fort Pickens, which controlled the entrance to Pensacola harbor. Here the life was monotonous, broken occasionally by night alarms from the pickets, invariably false, and by the continual contest with millions of sand fleas and gnats.

During the night of May 9, 1862, Pensacola was evacuated by the Confederates, who set fire to the fortifications and city upon leaving. Two days later Union forces from Santa Rosa, the Seventy-fifth, the Sixth New York, nicknamed "Wilson's Zouaves," and a force of regulars, entered the city, and Major Babcock was appointed provost marshal and military governor of the town. During his period of service in this position, from May 15, until September 1, 1862, the seventeen letters forming the sixth group were written, and they show the character of the people he came in contact with, many of whom were runaway slaves. Thus the "Contraband" question was an important matter to be dealt with.

The next group, of which there are but four letters, dated from September 1 to October 12, 1862,<sup>1</sup> was written from New Orleans, La., where the Seventy-fifth was stationed until the middle of October on garrison duty. News of McClellan's failure and defeat before Richmond began to reach them in the form of constant rumors of success and disaster, the latter being finally confirmed from northern sources. These letters reflect very strongly the feeling of depression which followed that withdrawal. On January 9, 1863, orders were issued for the beginning of a campaign into the Teche country, to operate from

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<sup>1</sup> From October 15, 1862 to January 9, 1863 there are no letters, as Mrs Babcock arrived in New Orleans on November 3d, and stayed in Camp Kearney, some distance up the river from the city, with her husband until January 1863.

Brashear City as a base of supplies, and the Seventy-fifth took the field as a part of the force sent out. The nineteen letters which compose this group were written from the field in the course of this expedition, which reached Alexandria, La., and then withdrew after a period of long exhausting marches, with little gain, except some cotton which had been seized. This period closed on May 24, 1863, when the regiment was sent as part of the army to attack Port Hudson, a powerful fortress on the Mississippi river.

Eight letters describing the siege operations against this position, which closed the Mississippi to gunboats dispatched from New Orleans to aid in the attack on Vicksburg, were sent to Mrs Babcock at Brashear City, La., with dates from May 30 to July 9, 1863, when the Confederates surrendered to the besieging Union forces. Colonel Babcock took an active part in two assaults. While acting as brigade commander in charge of the skirmishers leading the attacking force in the second general assault of June 14th, he received a severe wound in the leg which incapacitated him from duty for some time. Returning from sick leave July 1st, he assumed command of the Seventy-fifth New York, and led his regiment in the place of honor immediately following the Volunteer Thousand Storming Party, into Port Hudson, when the formal surrender of the fortress took place on the morning of July 9, 1863. At the end of this period of activity, the Seventy-fifth went into camp for rest for a time near Donaldsonville, La., and later near Thibodeaux, and from these camps the seven letters forming the next group were written with dates from July 12th to August 1st. The regiment was worn out from the arduous service of the preceding 5 months, and was to some extent disorganized, in consequence of its heavy loss in officers and men.

On August 22d Colonel Babcock was relieved of his command<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Colonel Babcock was relieved of his command and court-martialed because he had criticized some actions of General Banks in a private letter sent to his home in Owego, N. Y. Through some oversight this letter was published in the local paper and came to the notice of General Banks. Convicted by the court-martial, Colonel Babcock was dismissed from the service of the United States, and was not again a member of the army until January 28, 1864, when he was reinstated upon the strong recommendations of several of his superior officers. The letter never was intended for publication but was printed through the indiscretion of a friend. Colonel Babcock was not allowed to get witnesses to prove the truth of statements he had made, nor was he given sufficient opportunity to obtain papers and evidence necessary for his defense. The answer to the charge and other papers in connection with the case are extant, and together with the diaries throw light on the affair.

and returned to New Orleans, where he remained until July 22, 1864. On February 10, 1864, he became chief of staff of the cavalry division of West Mississippi, Department of the Gulf, and later inspector general on the same staff. The ten letters in the next group, covering only a short time at the end of this period after the departure of his wife for the North, June 26 to July 30, 1864, show something of conditions in New Orleans, of the meeting of the constitutional convention for reconstruction, and of his experiences while on cavalry inspection tours through the department. Colonel Babcock's diaries kept regularly throughout the war until his death, throw further light on life in New Orleans during the period not covered by the letters. Himself strongly hostile to General Banks, he shows the growing feeling among the other officers in the department against the commanding general, and the lessening of his control over military affairs in the district.

The last group of twenty-four letters covers the period from August 2d to the death of the writer on October 6, 1864. Many of these are short and hastily written, as the Army of the Potomac under General Sheridan, to which the Seventy-fifth had been assigned, commenced a vigorous campaign against the Confederates under General Early, operating in the Shenandoah valley, shortly after Colonel Babcock reported for duty with his regiment at Tennallytown, D. C. These letters, written in a cramped, nervous hand, describe very fully certain forms of camp life which had been imperfectly shown in previous ones, and furnish valuable material for this study. From September 14th to 17th, Colonel Babcock endeavored to obtain an order sending him home on recruiting service to fill up his regiment and had received the consent of all his superior officers except General Sheridan, who postponed it for a few days until a decisive struggle with Early should have occurred. This battle took place on September 19, 1864, the Battle of Winchester or Opequan Creek, where Sheridan defeated the Confederates in a desperate engagement with very heavy losses. In the course of a charge across an open field in the face of a murderous fire, Colonel Babcock received a severe wound in the thigh, from the effects of which he died in the Winchester hospital on October 6, 1864.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Besides the letters written by Colonel Babcock, there are several in the collection written by other people to him during this period, which contain information on the subject of the study and have been used to supplement the others.

Colonel Babcock seems to have been a very able and efficient officer, judging from letters and statements made by his superior officers at the time of his dismissal and after his death, and from the number of special assignments he received detaching him from his regiment and the compliments given for the performance of them. According to statements the family received after his death the men esteemed him highly, although he had the reputation of being a strict disciplinarian. They felt that he was willing to lead where he ordered them to go. He rose in rank steadily from the position of first lieutenant in the Third New York, in which regiment he enlisted April 18, 1861, to a captaincy in the Sixty-fourth New York, was elected major of the Seventy-fifth, and finally became lieutenant colonel in the same regiment, a position he held until his death. He was in command of his regiment much of the time, because of the ill health of Colonel Merritt, and in charge of the brigade at different times both during the siege of Port Hudson and subsequently. He acted as a member of several courts-martial as judge advocate, served as military governor of Pensacola for 4 months in 1862, and held the positions of chief of staff under General Lee, and inspector general of cavalry in the Department of the Gulf under General Davidson for 6 months in 1864. Congress, after his death, brevetted him colonel and brigadier general for gallantry on the field of Winchester.

## CHAPTER II

### CAMPS AND FORTIFICATIONS

#### CAMPS

When news of the firing on Fort Sumter reached the people of the North through the newspapers on the evening of Saturday, April 13, 1861, enthusiasm for the war showed itself immediately. The Legislature of the State of New York acted promptly by voting "a war bill for \$2,000,000 and a tax to raise it,"<sup>1</sup> and public meetings for raising the thirteen regiments required were held everywhere, in which "the fever for volunteering ran high."<sup>2</sup> As troops began to pour into Albany and other concentration points for muster into the service of the United States, the lack of preparation of the state for handling large bodies of men became evident. Facilities were lacking for feeding the men promptly at meal times, clothing of poor quality was hastily furnished by contractors,<sup>3</sup> and housing arrangements were poor.

When Company H, Third New York Volunteer regiment, arrived in Albany on April 28th, it was assigned to temporary quarters in the Adams House.<sup>4</sup> The officers were quartered in the Delevan House. Four days later the company, as a part of a larger force of one thousand troops, was transferred to the Albany Barracks, "a large brick building."<sup>5</sup> "Our quarters is a bare unfurnished room in the fourth story of the main building, stretching from front to rear, with six large windows, two on each of three sides, along the sides of which, on the floor, our straw beds are ranged. We have straw beds and blankets — no other sleeping accommodations. Four captains and eight lieuts. now occupy it. We have one large table to write on, a few rickety chairs, one wash bowl and pitcher, a couple of pails, and a spittoon. Scattered around are satchels, valises, shoe brushes, swords, boxes of epaulets, cigars etc."<sup>6</sup> The men slept "in

<sup>1</sup> *Mss* Diary of W. Babcock, April 16, 1861.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, April 18th.

<sup>3</sup> Henry Hall, "A Record of the 19th N. Y. Volunteers, and 3d New York Artillery." In *Cayuga in the Field*, p. 31 (Auburn, N. Y., 1873).

<sup>4</sup> Diary, April 28, 1861.

<sup>5</sup> W. Babcock to Mrs Babcock, Albany, N. Y., April 28, 1861. References to Colonel Babcock's letters to his wife will hereafter be by place and date only.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, May 3, 1861.

bunks ranged one over another three deep, but so apart as to allow a free and perfect circulation of air all through the lofty rooms from windows on each side.”<sup>7</sup>

Upon the arrival of the Seventy-fifth New York in New Orleans early in September of 1862,<sup>8</sup> it was assigned to quarters in the United States Barracks there, and the men proceeded to make themselves comfortable during their stay. “You would be amused to see how quick our men supply themselves with comforts and accommodations here, and everywhere they go. Tables, stools, bedsteads, mosquito bars, and all sorts of furniture which can be used, seem to come out of rough lumber by magic. I trust I have learned to look out for myself very well. I have, today, besides my military duties, got me a new table, stool, bedstead, and a frame for my mosquito bars. I have got a table for Carpenter<sup>9</sup> nearly made. I got up a stove and was able to invite several officers to dinner — an excellent dinner at home in my own quarters.”<sup>10</sup>

Life in the barracks, however, formed a very small part of army service during the war. There was only a short time in any case when a regiment could remain idle in barracks, for the total available force was needed at all times to aid in carrying on the war. As a result, tents were the usual means of sheltering an army on a campaign. These were of two kinds, the wall tents and the shelter tents. Under ordinary circumstances the regulation “A” tents were carried with the army on wagons following the advance closely.

The Third regiment first encamped under canvas at the Battery in New York City while waiting orders to leave for the front. “For the first time, I have builded me a house this afternoon. It is a little tent, rectangular on the floor, about 8 by 12 feet, and shaped like a low Swiss cottage with a very sharp gable and steep roof. Our boys are quartered in 20 tents which are ranged on each side of a street about 30 feet wide and 10

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, April 28, 1861.

<sup>8</sup> At this period Lieutenant Babcock had become lieutenant colonel of the Seventy-fifth New York. He served with the Third New York until November 1, 1861, when he left it to become captain in the Sixty-fourth regiment, and later major of the Seventy-fifth New York Volunteers. Colonel Dodge resigned June 21, 1862, and Lieutenant Colonel Merritt became colonel, and Major Babcock, lieutenant colonel by promotion.

<sup>9</sup> Lieutenant Lewis E. Carpenter, quartermaster of the Seventy-fifth New York.

<sup>10</sup> Steamer *Ocean Grove*, and New Orleans, La., September 5, 1862. (Letter begun September 2d.)

rods long, which comes up to and stops at my tent. Four boys are quartered in each tent, the Capt. has a tent, and the two Lieuts. have one together."<sup>11</sup> Furnishings were few and rude, a "rough board table" and a "straw mattress on which I must soon camp down and rest for the morrow."<sup>12</sup>

After a few days here, the regiment advanced to a point about a mile from Hampton, Va., near Old Point Comfort, and pitched camp. Arriving late in the afternoon and not receiving the tents until dark, the soldiers merely set up a few tents for shelter from the rain until morning, when permanent arrangements were made according to army regulations for a camp. "It was 10 o'clock when I got in out of the rain, wet with rain and perspiration, and lay down on a blanket on the wet soil of a cornfield, and, blocked up on one side by my valise, and on the other by some tent poles, I managed to get some rest. I was up by 5 o'clock this morning, and have been hard at work ever since. Our tents had all to be struck and rebuilt in order."<sup>13</sup>

The site was a pleasant one near Hampton Roads, about 2½ miles from Fort Monroe, Va., but "in the enemy's country" with rebel batteries and fortifications in plain view, and constant vigilance was required to prevent attack and loss of men and stores by capture in sudden raids.<sup>14</sup> "The houses all about here are deserted, and the little village of Hampton right in sight of us, has not a dozen white people in it. Houses, lands, provisions, furniture etc., were all left at the approach of the Zouaves a few days ago. This morning, a half dozen of our officers went out on a sort of marauding expedition across an arm of the bay to Hampton, and ransacked a number of houses. Pianos, beds, stoves, tables, and in some cases tables spread for meals were found a few days ago as the occupants habitually left them, but now mostly displaced."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> New York City, May 21, 1861.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Near Hampton, Va., June 6, 1861.

<sup>14</sup> "We are here in a most beautiful region on the Hampton Roads where earth and sea vie with each other in loveliness. Our camp is in the enemy's country, and across the bay in plain sight of us is Sewall's Point, and a little farther up is the mouth of Aquia creek, both now famous as the seat of batteries of the Secessionists. Yesterday and today, there has been cannonading in full view of us, between the little steamer Harriet Lane and the batteries. Last night the enemy were up in some force within a mile of us, and four men stole as many barrels of our crackers. Their scouting parties come down quite to where our outposts are." Near Hampton, Va., June 6, 1861.

<sup>15</sup> Near Hampton, Va., June 6, 1861.



After a few days spent in the organization of the camp, drills began and everything was arranged for a long stay. Furniture appeared as if by magic for the tents, and the men were not averse to fresh meat and food which was stolen from a hostile country in spite of regulations against such actions.<sup>16</sup> As the heat of summer in the southern states began to make itself felt, arrangements were made for the comfort of the men thus forced to live in hot canvas tents pitched on the sea sand, by setting drills early in the morning or late in the afternoon,<sup>17</sup> by sheltering the guards as much as possible, and by looping up the tents on all sides so as to give a free circulation of air throughout.<sup>18</sup> Bushes were cut and stuck up over the tents of the men and awnings were utilized to shelter the officers' quarters. Havelocks also were furnished to the men to guard against sunstroke.<sup>19</sup> Not much was done during this summer heat, for exhaustion and sickness followed any unusual exertion during the noon hours. A single expedition and battle, that of Great Bethel, in which the Union forces were defeated, showed the futility of attempting any vigorous advance during the hot weather, for the men, exhausted by a night march, a battle during the heat of the day and a 12-mile march home again, were used up completely for several days following, and the sick list showed a perceptible increase for some time.<sup>20</sup>

On July 26th, the Third New York was ordered to Washington to reinforce the garrison there, but the destination was changed to Fort McHenry, Baltimore, and camp was pitched near the walls. "Our camp here is quite unsupplied with conveniences. Water must be got within the Fort. We have no floors for our tents but the grass which is nature's carpeting.

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, Friday, June 7, 1861. (Letter begun June 6th.)

<sup>17</sup> Camp Hamilton, Va., June 14, 1861.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, June 21, 1861. (Letter begun June 20th.)

<sup>19</sup> Havelocks, so called after Sir Henry Havelock, an English general, were a kind of cloth cover slipped on over, or instead of, a cap, hanging down over the neck and shoulders for protection against the sun.

<sup>20</sup> "Several of our boys are quite exhausted and sick from sheer fatigue. You can have no conception of the terrible fatigue of one battle day. We marched several miles from Hampton on the double quick step—a sort of run—and it nearly killed the men off." Camp Hamilton, Va., June 14, 1861.

The battle of Great Bethel took place on June 11th, a Union force being sent by night to surprise the Confederate works near New Bethel. Through delays, the attack was not made until 9 o'clock in the morning. "We drew off in good order about 12½ o'clock. It was a weary march home 12 miles in a hot sun. Exhausted as we were, we accomplished it by sunset. Many were quite worn out." Diary, June 11th.

Nary chair is to be had, nor a bedstead. So we sit on trunks, on the ground and lie on our beds. I have not even a nail to hang a vest on. But it is a beautiful place after all. The waters of the bay and river surrounded by such rich verdure, and then the ever moving fleet of white sails near us make it very pleasant. We have a delightful bathing place too. So that on the whole we are as well encamped as we have been anywhere. There is no such cool breeze as we had at Camp Hamilton, but the city is near us with all its conveniences.”<sup>21</sup> In this camp as in the other, however, furniture made its appearance in the form of camp stools and tables, although floors were still lacking<sup>22</sup> and the men settled down for another period of inactivity.

Nevertheless, health conditions were not altogether satisfactory, for the site chosen for the camp was unhealthful, and fever made its appearance. Lieutenant Babcock himself became sick with typhoid fever, and was invalided home on furlough for 6 weeks.<sup>23</sup> On his return to duty early in October, he wrote: “I find it very sickly where we are. Several deaths have occurred, and more are likely to occur of fever.”<sup>24</sup> The cold, rainy fall came on and caused general discomfort among the men, sorely in need of new tents and warm blankets to replace those which had been in use all summer.

The Seventy-fifth New York, in which regiment Lieutenant Babcock had been elected major, was ordered to Santa Rosa Island, Florida, and left New York City December 6, 1861. “We are to be encamped at Pickens<sup>25</sup> near the walls, right on the bare white sand, in full view and easy range of two rebel Forts and the Navy Yard battery. Any bombardment of Pickens would drive us out — helpless as we are — instanter. Good water is easy gotten on the Island and the location is quite as healthy summer and winter, as there is on the globe. The sun shines very hot here now, at mid-day, but there is a breeze all

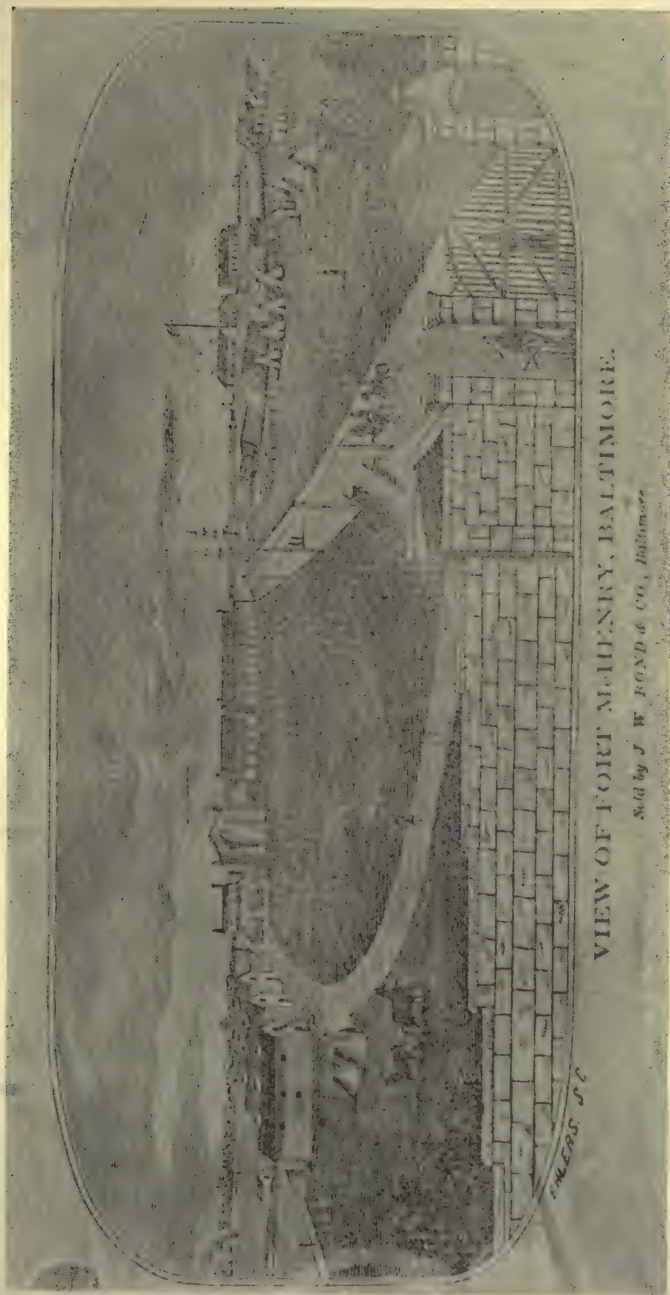
<sup>21</sup> Fort McHenry, Baltimore, August 2, 1861.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, Friday, August 9, 1861. (Letter begun August 7th.)

<sup>23</sup> August 17 to October 8, 1861. Diary, 1861.

<sup>24</sup> Fort McHenry, Baltimore, October 8, 1861.

<sup>25</sup> Fort Pickens was a large fortification of solid masonry on Santa Rosa island, commanding the channel which gave entrance to Pensacola harbor. When the Confederates seized the fortifications guarding the harbor and town on the mainland, they also attempted to get Fort Pickens, but the place was too well garrisoned and fortified. As long as the Union forces held this island and fort, the harbor and port of Pensacola were practically useless to the Confederates as a shipping point. A blockading fleet, also, was on guard duty just beyond the reefs and bar which lined the entrance. See following section dealing with fortifications.



VIEW OF FORT MIFFLIN, BALTIMORE.

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the time.”<sup>26</sup> Camp was established between two parallel sand ridges, all on one street with headquarters for the field and staff officers in a large shed covered with canvas inside of which the tents were pitched.<sup>27</sup> The ingenuity of the men was again exercised to good advantage, and tables, washstands, shelves and chairs made their appearance.<sup>28</sup> “We have room plenty, shade, good water and sufficient attendance.”<sup>29</sup>

Secure and easy-going as it appeared, the element of danger was not lacking from the life on Santa Rosa island. The camp of the regiment was within “easy range of two rebel forts and the Navy Yard battery. Any bombardment of Pickens would drive us out — helpless as we are, instanter.”<sup>30</sup> “In the tent where I dined yesterday was a ragged hole in the roof and a corresponding one in the floor where a fragment of a shell from secessia came down through, the other day. The piece lay there still. A spent ball from Fort McRea came over Fort Pickens, dashed through the same tents, knocked over camp stools, table and crockery all into indiscriminate ruin, going out through the rear of the tent. Fragments of rebel shells are abundant and two large shells lie in our street, which were thrown the other day and failed to explode.<sup>31</sup> Everything looks serious all about us.”<sup>32</sup> On the night of May 9, 1862, when the evacuation of Pensacola by the Rebels took place and Fort Pickens and the Union batteries opened on forts McRee and Barrancas on the

<sup>26</sup> Santa Rosa island, Florida, December 14 [15], 1861.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, December 16 [17], 1861. (Letter begun December 14 [15].)

<sup>28</sup> “I have one large tent by myself (I am entitled to two) which is all I want or can use. It is neatly framed and floored, and I have for furniture, my camp bed, a good pine table, a wash cupboard, shelves and nails for all my books, notions, and clothes. My bed is a cot, over which for a mattress I have a thick quilt doubled, a quilt for a pillow and my blanket and another nice quilt for bed clothing. . . . I am to have some barrel chairs in a day or two.” *Ibid.*, December 20, 1861.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, December 14 [15], 1861.

<sup>31</sup> A surprise attack was attempted by the Confederates on the night of October 9, 1861, from the rear, against Colonel Wilson’s Zouaves. The force landed on the eastern end of the island by night and, driving in or killing the pickets stationed in a line across the island about 3 miles from the fort, nearly succeeded in capturing the camp. A sharp engagement took place and the Confederates were finally defeated. In retaliation, on November 22–23d Fort Pickens as well as the other Union batteries commanding the rebel works on the mainland bombarded the whole position furiously. In the course of this cannonading, the shells spoken of were hurled. *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, series I, VI: 469–71.

<sup>32</sup> Santa Rosa island, Florida, December 16 [17], 1861. (Letter begun December 14 [15].)

mainland, to prevent further destruction by incendiarism, the two regiments on the island were moved some 2 miles back from the fort in order to protect them from any return shell fire.<sup>33</sup> None occurred, however, as the rebels were too anxious to leave Pensacola to reply to such a terrific bombardment.

Discomforts were many in this camp, also, although Colonel Babcock did his best to minimize them. As the camp was situated on the white sand of the shore, the reflection of the sun and the intense heat again forced the drills and other work about camp to be put in the early morning or late afternoon.<sup>34</sup> Millions of sand fleas infested the island and the men retired each night and "began a battle with the fleas,"<sup>35</sup> which had taken refuge in their beds.

Heavy wind and rain storms swept across the gulf, striking the island with their full force, and threatening to wreck the encampment erected on its shore. "To-night our little canvas shelter shakes and rattles and flaps in the breeze — or rather in the gale I should say — as if it would at any moment come down on our heads. It is well that the frame which sustains our awning is stout and that it is held down by three heavy wire cables or it would be blown to shreds in ten minutes. I have tied up my tent as tight as I can, and hung up blankets over the only opening in it, fastened everything taught, but my papers fly, my candle flares and melts, and my table shakes in the general disturbance."<sup>36</sup> The fierce gales carried the fine, loose, sand everywhere, into the tents, beds and food, driving it with great force against the faces of such as were forced to be out in the storm.<sup>37</sup>

The heavy wall tents were not, however, available for active campaigning, since a large number of wagons were required for their transportation, necessitating slow movements by the army. The men when on the march carried the light shelter tent, which

<sup>33</sup> Diary, May 9, 1862.

<sup>34</sup> Santa Rosa island, Florida, May 6, 1862. (Letter begun May 5th.)

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, February 7, 1862. (Letter begun February 6th.)

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, March 2, 1862.

<sup>37</sup> "The wind came up over night and blew this morning tremendously. The sand drifts and flies into one's face, eyes, and ears, tent, into his bed, among his papers, and even into the victuals, in the kitchen. . . .

The wind howls and sweeps around us tonight a perfect gale, blows down tents and drives the sharp sand into every cranny. . . . I have finished a nice door to my tent, which one of the boys has been making a frame for today,—a canvass door of course. Mine is covered with a bed tick and is quite tight and snug, and keeps out much cold air which has been in the habit of coming in without rapping at my casements." *Ibid.*, March 6, 1862.

furnished protection from the elements very quickly with minimum effort and required no time to strike, ready for a move. "I have just got up a little shelter tent, by favor of my faithful Daniel,<sup>38</sup> and it affords me just room to lie down with my head either way. My saddle is arranged for my pillow, my saddle blanket is my carpet, and my brown blankets are my bed. My furniture consists as yet only of the old red desk which stands on the ground facing my bed and I lie down on my elbow to write."<sup>39</sup>

"Imagine a little, long low house in which a five-year old baby could just stand up at the ridge, a house made of two shelter tents, long enough and snug enough for a bed for two or two and a half, carpeted with a few leaves and a little straw. . . . You would think I must be at the furthest end but I am not, for beyond me are saddles, valises, pistols, sabers, field glasses, dirty clothes, harness, and other miscellaneous gear enough to make a neat housekeeper mad. My candle and ink repose together on my coat which is folded on my saddle for a pillow. I sit coiled upon our blankets, like a Turk on his rug, twisting about to get an easy position, and hope for a full night's rest — our greatest aspiration here."<sup>40</sup> During a storm, the discomforts of living in a shelter tent were increased, for the canvas kept off only part of the rain and there was nothing to prevent the ground water from running under the edges into the tent.<sup>41</sup> As September came, the nights began to grow cold and the only refuge was inside the blankets forming the bed, since there was little protection afforded by the light shelter tents. "On a rainy dark day I tire of this little cramped up house, where the only attitude of tolerable comfort is to be prone on one's back, a house whose only and scanty merit is that it keeps out the rains."<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Daniel was a fugitive slave who had come into Pensacola in 1862, while Colonel Babcock was military governor there. From that time he had served him as a body servant.

<sup>39</sup> Tennallytown, D. C., August 10, 1864.

<sup>40</sup> Near Berryville, Va., September 11, 1864.

<sup>41</sup> "Last night as I went to bed it was even more bright than now [a moonlight night] and we scarcely thought of storm, and yet in an hour it was raining torrents, dripping on our heads, running under our beds in rills, washing into our boots, spoiling our papers that we had incautiously left out, and generally making us uneasy lest we should get soaked. We slept by spells, in much worryment, till daybreak, when it was no delightful task, nor one I would wish you to share, to get up and hunt one's wet clothes, boots and belt in the dark, and turn out to stand to arms in a pouring rain. But it had to be done! . . . It has rained by showers nearly all day and we have been perfecting our house until tonight it is proof against bad weather, and we will sleep nicely." *Ibid.*, September 11, 1864.

<sup>42</sup> Berryville, Va., September 14, 1864.

When the troops stayed in one place for several days, additions to the shelter tents were built of boughs or rails from neighboring fences. "We have a good large bough house for shelter, and Major Thurber is working away with the aid of the boys putting up our shelter tent to open like a bed room out of our parlor; so that we cannot complain of any hardship."<sup>43</sup> A few days later Colonel Babcock writes: "We took down our house yesterday and built a wall of rails for it about two feet high, built us a bunk of rails softened with straw, and pitched our shelters high enough so that I am able now to sit comfortably on the bed and write on my ammunition box very like a Christian."<sup>44</sup>

One other type of shelter for an army in the field seems to have been used extensively in bivouacs for a few days, the rude hut, constructed hastily by the soldiers out of boughs or broad fence rails. While Lieutenant Babcock was with the Third regiment in Virginia in June 1861, the pickets built and used these huts for protection from the heat and to some degree from bad weather. "The ingenuity of our predecessors has constructed numerous little huts of boughs and rails, and a little beyond the old Hut, [an old deserted negro cabin] in the shelter of the forest, and but a step from the road you can find what is now the 'Officers Quarters', a place. . . . of some ingenuity and pretensions. . . . A large wild grape vine has climbed to the top of a vigorous mulberry tree and wound and interlaced itself all about its boughs and among the boughs of a couple of thriving saplings close by it, and hanging down over the outer boughs of them all, it forms a beautiful little bower. The limbs and brush have been cleaned away under it, and a rustic seat erected. . . . The rays of the sun are all shut out and the cool breeze from the North comes along the clearing and rustles through the trees."<sup>45</sup>

Much less ornamental than this headquarters for the picket guard in a Virginia forest but far more useful were the rude shelters erected by the soldiers, first near Opelousas, and later on the lines besieging Port Hudson, La., in 1863. "It is a

<sup>43</sup> Near Charlestown, Va., September 2, 1864.

<sup>44</sup> Berryville, Va., September 16, 1864. (Letter begun September 14th.)

<sup>45</sup> Camp Hamilton, Va., July 2, 1861.

"We went out yesterday morning on picket duty and our company was quartered at the little bower of which I wrote you. . . . In the forenoon it was very pleasant. . . . It rained a little in the afternoon, but was comparatively comfortable until near midnight when it began to rain in torrents, and absolutely poured down steadily, until long after



delightful place where we are, in a beautiful level plain, like one of our Homer meadows, as bright and green as ever you saw, and a few minutes ago it was dotted with a magnificent herd of cattle. The weary soldiers are building their huts with the broad rails from the fences, plucking chickens, cutting up beef, and making ready for a luxurious rest over the morrow.”<sup>46</sup> “We are shut out from the civilized world by groves of trees on every side. In front, bounded like our camp by trees, is a beautiful parade, in rear are a number of nice springs bubbling out like our Northern springs, all around us is contented, animated life. My house has as yet but an imperfect roof and two sides, all made of fence pickets, but Daniel will complete it before night, so as to keep the sun out. As for rain, let it come and to the earth which way it will. Daniel is sweeping off the turf around my house, as good natured as he is busy. The horses stand near in the shade, and the hum of camp has a subdued Sunday sound.”<sup>47</sup>

A bough hut sheltered the besiegers in some of the positions on the Port Hudson line, offering a certain amount of protection against the bullets of the sharpshooters, and a refuge from the heat.<sup>48</sup> During the campaign of August and September of 1864, a combination of shelter tents and bough huts was used, since the shelter hut merely furnished room for sleeping quarters. “Regimental Hd. Qrs. are in the field behind the center [of the line of works] where Major Thurber and myself have a good

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daylight this morning. I lay down about 10 o'clock, somewhat tired, and fixed my bed on a little sloping platform of slats so that water would not stand on it. My bed of course, was my rubber blanket, and this time I had my large white blanket. When it began to rain I rolled up in my white blanket and stretched the rubber blanket over head and feet and addressed myself again to sleep. While it poured in streams over head and feet and body, I slept away, waking often but falling away again until near daylight when it began to be so wet, that I had to be conscious of it. ‘Dan Rice,’ our boy, lay near me on his rubber blanket with a woolen one over him, wet to the skin, snoring away for dear life. Capt. Catlin was by my side, wet as a rat, and all around us in the little bush tents, the boys were keeping out rain as well as might be.” *Ibid.*, July 7, 1861. (Letter begun July 5th.)

<sup>46</sup> Opelousas, La., April 20, 1863.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, April 26, 1863.

<sup>48</sup> “I do not know that I shall live to write my name to this letter . . . for one bullet has passed through my shelter of boughs since I have been writing.

“You may be sure that I am by this time very tired, for I have not had a fair sleep since we parted, unless my rest last night can be called fair, when I slept without a dry thread of clothing, within fifty feet of a battery which was firing a good deal, amid the thunders of the mortars of the fleet, and the incessant rattle of the sharpshooters’ rifles not far to the front.” Near Port Hudson, La., May 30, 1863.

sized house of boughs along the back side of which we have a good seat of rails, which answers for a lounge in front of this a table on which I write, and on the floor a carpet of straw. Major T. is building a toilet stand with a cracker box, which will fill one corner. In front it is open, and a sentry paces his beat. At my right opening into the house, is my shelter tent, carpeted with a large oilcloth, and in it you could see our bed as we got out of it, solid if not ornamental. . . . Daniel is just back of me, busy washing my clothes and doing some other jobs of the sort for which he receives postal currency.”<sup>49</sup>

Sometimes when a halt was made only for the night the men did not take the trouble to pitch tents or build bough huts, but merely lay down on the ground wrapped in their blankets. Tent-flies were erected for the officers.<sup>50</sup> In the course of the march to attack Port Hudson conditions were even worse than usual. “In the morning we went to Bayou Sara [from Morganzia], and landed, where we cooked two days’ rations and then, in the afternoon, in the worst dust I ever saw, cooped up between high hedges all the way, marched to a point above Port Hudson, in the woods near the river. We lay down in a dry, dusty corn-field after dark, and without water to wash or much to drink, tried to rest. Early next morning, Tuesday, we wound our way through the worst roads I ever saw in the woods, (we have seen worse every day since,) to a field about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile from the enemy’s outer lines of defense, where their pickets had been driven in the day before by Col. Van Zandt’s brigade. Here we lay until Wednesday morning, and had a very fair chance to rest, though greatly troubled by scarcity of water.”<sup>51</sup>

Shelter was often obtained for the troops when they reached towns or cities by commandeering empty buildings for their accommodation.<sup>52</sup> This process became a favorite means with the officers in getting suitable houses for regimental, brigade and division headquarters.<sup>53</sup> The officers of the first body of troops to come up would requisition the best houses for headquarters, and other later forces had to take what was left. A similar process was employed in getting quarters for the staff officers attached to the headquarters of the Department of the Gulf in

<sup>49</sup> Near Charlestown, Va., September 11, 1864.

<sup>50</sup> Near Franklin, La., April 14, 1863.

<sup>51</sup> “Port Hudson or Thereabouts,” La., May 30, 1863.

<sup>52</sup> Baltimore, Md., July 29, 1861.

<sup>53</sup> Camp Hubbard, near Thibodeaux, August 1, 1863.

New Orleans. A formal inventory was taken<sup>54</sup> and houses were commandeered for the use of the army. A superior officer could and did order subordinates to find other quarters, if he desired the house they had.<sup>55</sup>

The permanent regimental camps were laid out according to a given plan prescribed "by army regulations." A large space was always reserved in front of the line of tents for the battalion parade ground.<sup>56</sup> "Our streets are being regularly ditched and leveled, drains dug in rear of tents, arches built for fire places and the ground in front of the officers' tents smoothed and cleaned off. I have made a diagram of our camp — all regimental camps are alike, by regulation. . . .

"Where the letters A. B. C. D. etc. are is the front of the camp where we form our regimental line. The streets of the privates and sergeants and corporals are numbered from right to left 1 2 3 4 5 6 etc., one for each company perpendicular to the front. Each company has a street with a row of tents on each side facing inward. The row of circles which you see is the company kitchens. The next row, running *parallel* to the front and perpendicular to the Company streets is the tents of the 'Non Commissioned Staff,' consisting of Assistant Surgeon, Quarter Master's Sergeant, Sergeant Major, Drum Major etc. The next row is that of the 'officers of the line,' Captains & Lieuts. I have marked my tent with a cross and Capt. Catlin's with a little circle. In rear of us are the tents of the Col. Lieut. Col. Major & Col.'s staff consisting of Chaplain, Adjutant, Quarter Master and Surgeon."<sup>57</sup> This was the normal arrangement of a regimental camp, but circumstances often altered the form. On Santa Rosa island, owing to the conformation of the ground, the camp was "pitched between two sand ridges running parallel to the Island all on one street."<sup>58</sup>

<sup>54</sup> "We have not lacked our evening sport today. Yesterday I went with Col. Sherburne [chief of staff under General Davidson] and we had this house assigned to us as quarters. By the way, they count the rooms in houses now, and assign a house to two or more officers. Today at 5 P. M. the Qr. Mr's. Clerk came up to take an inventory of the property here."

"Well, they will have to go out in a day or two. Col. Sherburne will have the front rooms. . . . Col. S. expects his wife and children soon, and I shall probably live with them." New Orleans, La., July 13, 1864. (Letter begun July 12th.)

<sup>55</sup> "Gen. Davidson [the new chief of cavalry] has taken the Slocum House, and notified Lt. Col. Abert and Capt. Crosby to get out of it today. This highly summary mode of getting a house is superior to the patent of Major Carpenter and myself." New Orleans, La., June 26, 1864.

<sup>56</sup> Camp Hamilton, Va., July 24, 1861.

<sup>57</sup> Camp Hamilton, Va., July 24, 1861.

<sup>58</sup> Santa Rosa Island, Fla., December 16, 1861. (Letter begun December 14 [15], 1861.)



It was difficult to keep a camp occupied by such a large number of men, clean and sanitary, but this was accomplished as far as possible by changing the site at intervals, and by a general cleaning up of the grounds. "On Saturday afternoons, once in two weeks, we strike our tents, tip up the floors, clear out the rats, sweep up and air everything. It would interest you to see us take down our village. Three taps of the drum, and the men stand by their tents and loosen the cords. Then a single tap of the drum, and the officer at the head of each company street orders 'Strike,' when down goes the whole camp in an instant."<sup>59</sup>

The question of water supply was always one of great importance in the selection of a camp site, for on it would depend in large degree the health of the force. In Virginia, near the coast, where the Third regiment was encamped, the water was more or less brackish, and not clear, but as no other was available the men had to use it.<sup>60</sup> Of the water encountered near Vermillion river in Louisiana, Colonel Babcock says, "We found the water poor [along the line of march] and our men were terribly thirsty and footsore when at six o'clock we stopped for the night and bivouacked behind our line of stacks. There was a large lake just in front of us, but the water was such as cattle at the North could not be induced to drink, muddy, dark, and so full of vegetable matter decayed and decaying, that the coffee made from it was almost intolerable. Of course fever and ague must follow the use of it."<sup>61</sup>

Such, then, were the camps themselves, with their problems of shelter for so many hundred, of keeping the camp site as free as possible from waste and filth, which would breed disease, and of securing a good water supply, to prevent sickness, with its attendant reduction of battle efficiency in the regiment and army.

#### FORTIFICATIONS

Two classes of fortifications call for consideration: the field works, erected for protecting a camp or firing line; and the more permanent forts and batteries guarding important points, both Union and Confederate.

The usual means of defending a camp or firing line from a surprise attack was an abattis, ordinarily constructed of felled

<sup>59</sup> Fort McHenry, Baltimore, October 27, 1861.

<sup>60</sup> Camp Hamilton, Va., June 27, 1861. (Letter begun June 25th.)

<sup>61</sup> Near Vermillion river, La., April 18, 1863.

trees with the branches extending outward from the position.<sup>62</sup> Some entrenching was done, and the whole line, if possible, guarded by redoubts or field forts,<sup>63</sup> in which the batteries were placed in such a position as to command the line of approach. As attacks usually were made by rushes in mass formation directly through the field of fire, under cover of cannonading from their own batteries the losses were heavy in attempting to take such a defended position.<sup>64</sup>

The difficulty of attacking a place of this sort is shown by a letter describing the first assault on Port Hudson. "Our way led through the woods, over the most broken ground I ever saw, obstructed by deep gulches, running every way, trees and brush, and in some places by rude abattis made by the enemy. . . . At six o'clock the advance began. . . . We pushed on through the woods, keeping as good a line as we could, and by seven o'clock the woods resounded with the volleys of the advance and the enemy's first line. Shortly after the firing commenced, we overtook the first line (Col. Van Zandt's brigade)<sup>65</sup> and at the moment of reaching the enemy's position on the crest of a high ridge, passed them all. . . . Before us was an immense broken hollow, or as we afterwards found, succession of hollows in one large one, in which the enemy had felled trees in every direction, leaving only one road forward to this position, a road which was swept by grape and canister from a battery of five guns, one rifled forty-two and four smaller ones, situated on a high hill beyond.

"In these hollows, were 1500 Arkansas troops, some concealed and firing, others already fleeing."<sup>66</sup> A desperate charge carried a small force of men through this road to a very advanced position

<sup>62</sup> Santa Rosa island, Fla., January 3, 1861.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, February 15, 1862. (Letter begun February 6th.)

<sup>64</sup> "Our Regt. was the advance guard of the force until we formed line in front of the enemy's position. They had a battery on the road, with two 32 pdrs., [i. e. pounders] a rifle pit from the bayou to the woods, and field batteries in position at intervals, all on the very line where the 75th lay on the Bethel place when the Cotten was burned. The Diana [a gunboat] came down the bayou also, and when our line came within easy range, they opened a perfect feud'enfer on us. . . . The fire was very accurate, the very first or second shot dropped one of Canuth's teams, [Canuth was captain of a battery on this campaign] while iron flew everywhere." Franklin, La., April 14, 1863.

<sup>65</sup> Colonel Van Zandt's regiment was the Ninety-first New York Volunteers, but he was acting brigade commander at this time.

<sup>66</sup> Near Port Hudson, La., May 30, 1863.

which they successfully held, in one of these gullies.<sup>67</sup> " Luckily we got into a fine place and were able to hold our own, though I was in mortal fear of being killed by the troops behind us who dropped into shelter and fired all around us. The rebs tried every way to drive us out, and fired charge after charge of grape at us but we soon were reinforced so that we silenced the whole battery of five guns. They shifted position of the guns, and finally brought out a field piece in some bushes, but we drove them away and kept them from firing this piece or hauling it away until after dark that night. We lay about 10 to 15 rods from the enemy's rifle pits, almost between two of their camps, from Wednesday morning until Friday noon."

On Thursday evening "The enemy crept down a ravine to within forty or fifty feet of us, but made no attempt on our position."<sup>68</sup> Siege works were gradually pushed forward day by day, forming a smaller ring around the rebel fortress. The pioneers were put to work advancing the saps and approaches toward the enemy's position and making ready for the final assault. Through one of these covered trenches leading to the ditch in front of the rebel breastworks, the advance party of skirmishers attacked, on the morning of June 14, 1863, only to be repulsed with great loss of officers and men by the Confederates who had located the end of the sap and swept it with a heavy fire. On July 1st Colonel Babcock writes, "Our men now have covered approaches to within 20 or 30 feet of the enemy's works, our batteries are being constantly planted on smaller concentric circles and everything looks well."<sup>69</sup>

Volunteers for a "forlorn hope" were asked for, called the volunteer thousand storming party, to be hurled forward against a breach when made by the explosion of a mine, laid by the engineers under a vital point of the main breastworks. This mine, however, was never blown up, partly because General Banks did not want to sacrifice so many men, many of whom were officers, and partly because Port Hudson surrendered without the necessity of a third general assault.

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<sup>67</sup> Following a charge along a road swept by shell from a five-gun battery, "I reached the most advanced position which we have yet occupied, and saw the rebs running up the hill beyond into their inner line of rifle-pits and found myself here with only five or six men, one of whom was Johnny Matthews [of Company F, the first man to respond to the call for a charge] and another, a boy of the 91st Regt., who was already hit twice." Near Port Hudson, La., May 30, 1863.

<sup>68</sup> Near Port Hudson, La., May 30, 1863.

<sup>69</sup> Port Hudson, La., July 1, 1863.

Entrenching was the method used by the Army of the Potomac during the latter part of the war, and new positions were promptly defended by breastworks. This use of earthworks seems to have been something of a novelty to the men from the western armies, although rifle pits had been used in the attack on Port Hudson. "The Sixth Corps was fighting quite briskly for some hours near us, and after a good deal of maneuvering we got into position on the left, and received orders to entrench ourselves after the manner of the Army of the Potomac. So our men went to work almost literally with tooth and nail, as they had no entrenching tools. Before dark we had quite a formidable protection raised, and were ordered to stop and get what rest we could."<sup>70</sup> On the firing line near Berryville, "Our position was in a cross road in the edge of a wood with a cornfield in front. We had orders at once to throw up breastworks, and although the ground looked bare and unpromising, it was not long before we had a good deal of shelter. In an hour or so, we received some entrenching tools, and by ten P. M. we lay down on our arms, well covered."

"This morning at daybreak we stood to arms, but Johnny Reb did not come and we had orders to cease fortifying. But later orders directed us to build an abattis in front of our work, and we are still busy at it."<sup>71</sup>

Field works, also, were used to strengthen the permanent forts. Redoubts and rifle pits were built to command the roads and approaches to the main position in such a way as to subject the attacking forces to heavy loss in reaching the main fortification. "We are still building batteries commanding the roads from land to the Fort"<sup>72</sup> [Fortress Monroe, Va.].

The permanent forts were large structures of masonry and earth built to control important positions, with their heavy guns and mortars. On the Patapsco river, which forms the sea entrance to the city of Baltimore, were two forts, Fort Carroll, and Fort McHenry, commanding the approaches with ease.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Halltown, Va., August 23, 1864.

<sup>71</sup> Near Charlestown, Va., September 4, 1864. (Letter begun September 2d.)

<sup>72</sup> Camp Hamilton, Va., July 23, 1861. (Letter begun July 21st.)

<sup>73</sup> "The Patapsco River some six miles below the City proper [Baltimore] is quite narrow, and Fort Carroll, a little Fort like Sumpter [*sic*] right in the water commands the channel with great ease. But just above Fort Carroll it spreads out into two branches, and the Point between them is Locust Point. Fort McHenry is on the North side of this Point and we are encamped in the shade of the locust of Locust Point. . . . The North branch of the River is merely a long deep bay and the City stands on its Northern shore." Fort McHenry, Baltimore, August 3, 1861.





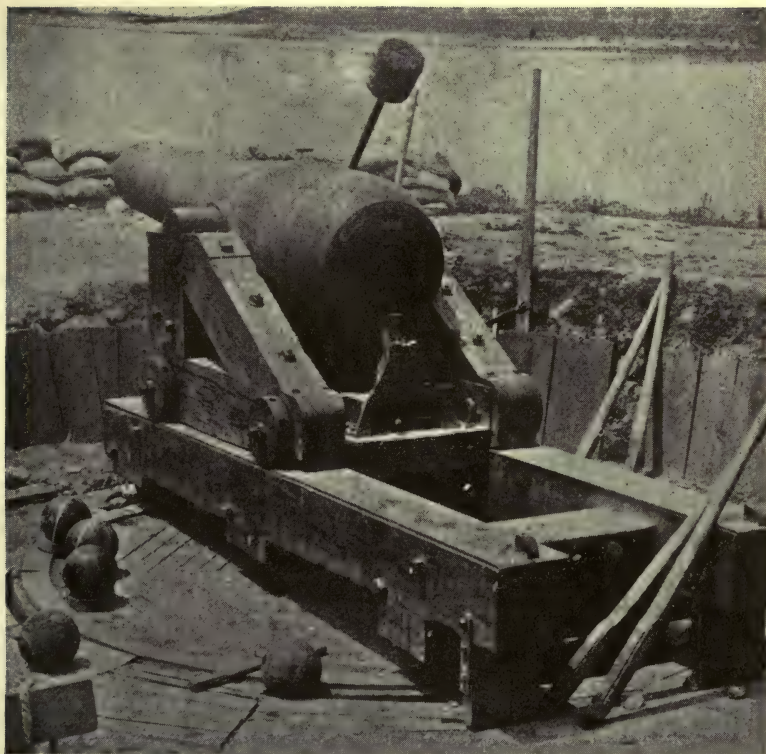
BLUFFS AT PORT HUDSON





BATTERY AT PORT HUDSON





LARGE GUN AT PORT HUDSON





PARAPET OF PRIEST CAP AT PORT HUDSON







VIEW OF PRIEST CAP AT PORT HUDSON





VIEW AT PRIEST CAP, PORT HUDSON





WORKS AT PRIEST CAP, PORT HUDSON





THE CITADEL AT PORT HUDSON







BATTERY AT PORT HUDSON





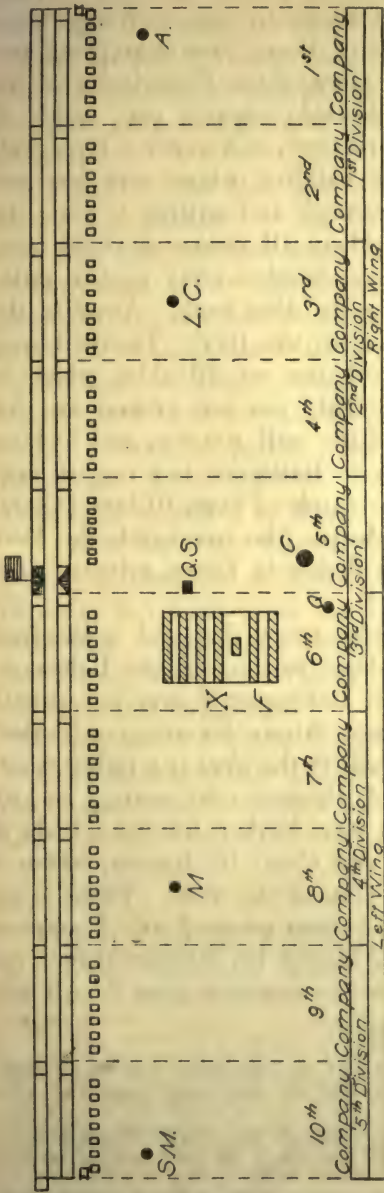
PRIEST CAP WORKS AT PORT HUDSON





GUN OPPOSITE HOLCROM'S BATTERY AT PORT HUDSON





- C Colonel
- L.C. Lieut-Colonel.
- M. Major.
- Q. Quarter-Master.
- A. Adjutant.
- S.M. Sergt. Major.
- Q.S. Qr. Master Sergt.
- X Field Music.
- F Band.
- G Color and Guard.
- H Right Guide.
- I Left Guide.

REGIMENT IN LINE OF BATTLE

(From Coppé, Field Manual of Evolutions of the Line, and Hardee, Rifle and Light Infantry Tactics.)

"Above you see our surroundings. The Fort proper is on the right where you see the flag-staff. You can see the walls and the buildings inside which cannot be, or are not, correctly represented, as in fact, there are five of them, just alike, long two story brick buildings on as many sides of the Fort, inside of the walls and facing inward. On the side towards you, inside of all are a few trees and a little shrubbery, and under a large well laden peach tree in front of the building whose rear you see, am I, sweating away in my regimentals and writing to you. In the foreground is the main gate where all visitors by land must enter, on the left is the bay which stretches away up two miles to receive the monumental city on its other bank. Away in the background the Patapsco stretches to the Bay. The buildings down . . . [*Ms missing* <sup>74</sup>ve] ran on all sides which is the Hospital of the Fort. The tents you see around are for prisoners and the guard. Behind the wall you see, and looking towards you, and towards the city of Baltimore is a row of huge mortars and on the ramparts are a couple of huge 10 inch Columbiads by means of which Maj. Morris who commands the Fort says he could set Baltimore so in flames in fifteen minutes time that it could not be extinguished."

"The Fort is being strengthened every day and a hundred men are now at work mounting huge mortars on the Baltimore side of the ramparts. Woe be to Baltimore if ever her streets are again filled with a secession mob thirsty for union or yankee blood. Major Morris who commands in the Fort is a rather fussy old gentleman with gray hair and whiskers who wears a cocked hat and military boots, but he is a New Yorker, who would like a chance to shell Baltimore.<sup>75</sup> He and Capt. *De Russey*, whom I spoke of as our possible Col. superintend the work. There is an Artesian well being bored in the fort near where I sit. I suppose the Fort proper is not far from the size of Ft. Sumter, though its walls are not so high and there are no casemate guns.<sup>76</sup> All are mounted '*en barbette*'<sup>77</sup> as it is called.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>74</sup> A part of the letter had been cut out at this point and is missing. Evidently a picture of Fort McHenry was on the front page and was removed.

<sup>75</sup> A mob of southern sympathizers fired on the Sixth Massachusetts regiment in the streets of Baltimore, Md., on April 19, 1861, killing several men.

<sup>76</sup> Casemate guns were cannons set in armored chambers, firing through embrasures in the walls. With this arrangement there was a large measure of protection for the cannoneers serving the guns.

<sup>77</sup> Guns mounted *en barbette* were cannon placed on platforms inside the fortifications high enough to permit firing over the top of the parapet.

<sup>78</sup> Fort McHenry, Baltimore, August 11, 1861.



Three strong fortresses guarded the entrance to Pensacola harbor, Florida, in 1862; Fort Pickens, on Santa Rosa island, and forts Barrancas and McRee opposite to it, on the mainland. "Fort McRea is a huge circular inclosure of brick on the shore of the mainland on our left as we come in, by ship, but we did not pass near enough to it to make out how many tiers of guns it has.

"Fort Pickens is a square brick fort east of McRea and on Santa Rosa Island."<sup>79</sup> For a number of years prior to 1861, this fort had not been kept in repair nor garrisoned, since the fortifications on the mainland controlled the channel and communication was easier with them. As secession developed, however, and various forts and arsenals were seized by order of the Rebel state officials, Lieutenant Slemmer, who commanded the Union garrison at forts Barrancas and McRee,<sup>80</sup> knowing that he could not hold the positions on the mainland against a prolonged attack and siege, withdrew with his force to Santa Rosa island, and began to put it in shape for defense.

"There has never been any sham about the war at this Post. From the time the gallant Slemmer came over to Pickens and began to put it in order for defense,<sup>81</sup> there has been only hard work here. For many years, Fort Pickens had not even been garrisoned, and Santa Rosa was only inhabited by alligators, rattle snakes, and ducks.

"Immense 'blindiers' have been built over the casemates, and magazines, columbiads mounted, on the bastions and protected by sand bags, heavy mortars mounted, batteries, Cameron, Scott, Lincoln, and Totten, erected and put in complete order,<sup>82</sup> bomb-

<sup>79</sup> On board Steamer Baltic, December 13, 1861. (Letter begun December 6.)

<sup>80</sup> *War of the Rebellion; Official Records*, series I, I: 333-40.

<sup>81</sup> Lieutenant Slemmer transferred his command to Fort Pickens on Santa Rosa island, from forts McRee and Barrancas on the mainland, during the days of January 9, 10, and 11, 1861. Larned, *Cyclopedia of Classified Dates*, p. 190.

<sup>82</sup> "The work of debarkation being completed, the camp was laid out and received the name of 'Camp Seward'. Near the southern shore of the island and a short distance to the east of the fort the tents were ranged on the sides of a regular street running east and west, known in the right wing [of the regiment] as Broadway, and in the left as Lincoln Avenue. Between the two wings, which were camped a little way apart, was Battery Totten, mounting two mortars of twelve and thirteen inch bores respectively.

"Our boys were not long in making an acquaintance with their surroundings. The big fort was the chief object of interest, its soil walls and huge guns formed a picture of impregnability. Between the fort and the western extremity of the island was planted Battery Scott, whose works

proofs built, hospitals and storehouses constructed, plank roads laid, boats, flats and barges collected, stores of forage, wood, provisions and ammunition landed through the surf at great risk and with the greatest labor, and transported from one to two miles through this soft loose sand, all with a force which now numbers less than two full regiments, and has for most of the summer numbered less than 1200 men sick and well. For months the troops here landed all their stores near two miles from the fort, and under a broiling sun, on the blinding white sand, rolled barrels and boxes, and carried tents and ammunition all that distance by hand for want of mules and carts. Day and night, in the heat and cold (for both are here), the poor fellows tugged and labored, compelled to exercise constant vigilance against the enemy, until a state of complete and perfect defense has been arrived at. It is probable now that the enemy with a line of works four miles in length forming a semi-circle of which Pickens is the center, might bombard us for a twelve month and our works be very little the worse for it. Lieut. Slemmer died in November, a martyr to his zeal and exhausting labors here.”<sup>83</sup>

The Confederates, also, had devoted great attention to the protection of Pensacola with its magnificent harbor. Marshes, forests and bayous had been used to good advantage in guarding the land approaches, and forts McRee and Barrancas, with the navy yard batteries and other works extending for four miles, controlled the entrance from the sea.<sup>84</sup> These fortifications had been used in the attack on Fort Pickens in connection with a land attack from the rear, on the night of October 9, 1861, but

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consisted of well filled sand bags, carefully piled; directly north of Camp Seward, near the shore of the narrow island, was Battery Cameron, while further to the east, between the camp of the Zouaves (which was north-east of Camp Seward), and the water's edge, was Battery Lincoln—all mounting guns capable of doing fearful damage to the rebel works across the channel.” Hall, *A Record of the 75th N. Y. Volunteers*. In *Cayuga in the Field*, p. 26.

<sup>83</sup> W. Babcock to Harry Wells (?), Santa Rosa island, Florida, March 13, 1862.

<sup>84</sup> “The rebels have fortified no place unless it may be Manassas Gap,—not even Norfolk, with the care and labor with which they have hedged up the entrance to Pensacola Harbor. From 6,000 to 10,000 men have beleaguered Fort Pickens, and fortified themselves, for eight or nine months in a position where nature has done much for them. Impenetrable thickets, morasses, and bayous, defend their rear, and guns and batteries line the road to Pensacola. Now after sparing the great Bragg to the defense of Mobile, with six or seven regiments, there are still some 3,000 or 4,000 men opposed to us. These men are not over anxious to fight, but are comparatively well-fed and well clothed—many of them armed with the most improved rifled musket.” *Ibid.*

the Confederate bombardment had been ineffective, and the return fire had done serious damage to the Rebel works a mile and a half distant across the channel. On two other occasions a bombardment of the respective fortifications was commenced, but each time the powerful guns and mortars of Fort Pickens, well supported by the shore batteries, silenced and seriously damaged the Rebel batteries, and for several months no shots were fired.

Port Hudson, Louisiana, was located on a high bluff commanding the Mississippi river, and offered great opportunities to the Confederates as a fortress. Heavy woods and deep ravines made approach difficult and defense easy since natural obstructions existed in profusion. Lines of rifle pits were dug and batteries planted behind them to command the few existing points of attack, through the ravines and gullies. Heavy guns, also, were placed in positions on the river front which enabled the defenders to control a wide stretch of the Mississippi. The accompanying views reproduced from photographs taken within a day or two after the surrender of Port Hudson on July 9, 1863, furnish a better idea of the nature of the fortifications and the injury they sustained from the fire of the Union siege guns than any verbal description. The comments beneath each picture are those jotted down at the time by Colonel Babcock, on the back of each photograph.

## CHAPTER III COMMISSARY

Napoleon said, "An army marches on its stomach," and the problem of supplying the army with food was one of the greatest to be solved by the commanding officers of the Union army during the Civil War. Transportation facilities and depots for concentrating supplies had to be provided at once on the outbreak of the struggle, and maintained in order for effective use throughout long and difficult campaigns.

New York State was one of the first to respond to the call for volunteers, and her troops began to move toward Albany within a few days after President Lincoln's first proclamation of April 15, 1861, calling for seventy-five thousand men to serve for 3 months. She was poorly equipped to handle the large body of men who soon assembled, however, and much discontent and inconvenience ensued. "I had no stomach for the food, and many of the poor fellows, Fred Pinney, L'Amoreaux, Peck and others ate little or nothing. The dinner was a vegetable soup, then each a plate full of beef and potatoes boiled into a kind a mixture. There was good bread, and the usual trimmings — No dessert or butter."<sup>1</sup>

The company mess was formed and put into operation after the army took the field, and might or might not include the company officers. "We have two cooks and a steward in the Company who serve one week. They draw the provisions for the Company daily at 10 A. M. and do the cooking. The food consists of fresh and salt beef, bacon, beans, rice and pilot bread, with salt, vinegar, coffee and sugar. The coffee is made for breakfast and supper not strong of course, and sweetened a little in the large kettle . . . . Yesterday noon I was so ravenously hungry that, although when about half through a dinner of bean soup I discovered the beans to be full of worms, I kept right on and finished my dinner, swallowing more or less worms at every mouthful. Today however, I left my beans and dined on bread and salt pork."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Albany, N. Y., April 28, 1861.

"The men had a mutiny at teatime last night and went in a body, with Capt. Catlin at their head, to Stanwix Hall for supper. They could not get in there, but the Captain is threatening to go home if the food is not better." *Ibid.*, Monday, April 29, 1861. (Letter begun April 28th.)

<sup>2</sup> Camp Hamilton, Va., June 15, 1861. (Letter begun June 14th.)

Near the seacoast the men eked out their scanty rations<sup>3</sup> with oysters and clams which they procured in large quantities.<sup>4</sup> Foraging at this period of the war was not permitted, but the eyes of the officers in command were closed to the killing of a few stray cattle and chickens which might happen to venture near the Union lines. When the men had money they purchased pies, cakes, pickled oysters, and other delicacies from the negroes living near the camp, who drew quite a revenue from such sales.<sup>5</sup> As the war went on, however, the rules concerning plundering were relaxed, and foraging became the regular method of filling out the marching ration. "The march was attended with the usual amount of foraging, and many a mess that night was supplied with every variety of barnyard game. One woman became so frantic with the loss of her chickens that she fell on her knees, and with clasped hands and upturned eyes, implored the Divine Mercy upon the godless wretches who were devastating her hen roost."<sup>6</sup> A herd of cattle was a fine prize for a hungry army to come upon, and short was its shrift.<sup>7</sup> Green corn and fruit also helped materially in preventing discontent on account of short rations tardily issued.<sup>8</sup> When the army was moving rapidly the men were required to keep several days' rations in their haversacks, in order that a shortage might not occur when the supply trains did not keep up with the force. "We are required to keep three days rations on hand constantly, and orders announce that these may be required to last 4 days. Sometimes three days rations have been ordered to last 5 days. The boys call this 'living on orders'. It makes some growling, but not a great deal of necessary suffering in a country where there are so many cattle."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>3</sup> "I am nearly sick today. This everlasting *short commons* is too much for me. It keeps me petulant and cross all the time. I could bite off a ten penny nail this morning. Our food is very good now-a-days, barring the entire absence of fruit and vegetables. The desiccated vegetables furnished are a very poor substitute for the genuine article." Camp Hamilton, Va., July 11, 1861.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, June 6, 1861.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, June 15, 1861. (Letter begun June 14th.)

<sup>6</sup> Clipping from *The New Orleans Era* of April 20, 1863, containing an unsigned letter to the *Era* dated April 17, 1863, from the field.

<sup>7</sup> Opelousas, La., April 20, 1863.

<sup>8</sup> "We staid down in the woods in the shade all day, skirmishing at long range with the enemy, and foraging for apples, corn and beef and pork, having a regular picnic." Halltown, Va., August 23, 1864.

"It is a perpetual green corn dance for the army here. The men rely on it greatly to eke out the scanty marching ration." *Ibid.*, August 27, 1864.

<sup>9</sup> Near Charlestown, Va., September 2, 1864.

"On Tuesday the four days' rations with which they [the men] started from Charlestown gave out, and only half days rations was issued for

Officers had their choice of several kinds of mess arrangements. "I have my allowance brought to me at my tent from the company mess and eat it alone. Some of the officers take their meals with an old darkey called 'Tony' at from 2/- to 4/- a meal. Others have a mess chest (containing all sorts of cooking conveniences and dishes to eat upon) and have their meals prepared by their servants." <sup>10</sup>

A few days later, however, Lieutenant Babcock joined one of these "mess" groups, and found the eating arrangements much better. "Catlin [captain of Company H, Third New York] and I, with several others have formed a 'mess' now, and we have regular meals. Eight of us go even shares, pay expenses and eat in one of the vacant recitation rooms of the Chesapeake Fem. Seminary. The delicate figures of the young ladies are still on the blackboard where they put them at the last recitation. But this in no way affects our enjoyment of the meals there. We have good coffee, bread & butter tea at night, and steak or ham. I commenced yesterday morning. It will cost me about 20/ to 24/ per week, and I shall find it for my health as well as for my comfort." <sup>11</sup> "We have just dined sumptuously for soldiers. We had soup, roast beef, baked ham, baked and mashed potatoes, beets and tomatoes and boiled corn. For dessert we had whortleberries and ice cream. We all mess together or rather board with a Mr. Alford, brother of Col. A[lford of the Third New York] who is our regimental sutler. We have good wholesome food at regular hours, and as you see, get some luxuries." <sup>12</sup>

This system was evidently far more satisfactory, although more expensive, <sup>13</sup> than the allowance arrangement from the company mess, for an officers' mess was formed in New York before the Seventy-fifth sailed for Santa Rosa island. A cook and a large store of provisions were taken with them on the transport to Florida. <sup>14</sup> "Our Mess is very pleasant. It is made up of the

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Wednesday. And it was afternoon on Thursday before any more was issued. I expected a good deal of noise and ill-feeling, but the only demonstration was an occasional shout of 'Hard Tack,' from some of the companies, and this was checked by a single word." Near Berryville, Va., September 9, 1864.

<sup>10</sup> Camp Hamilton, Va., June 14, 1861. *Ibid.*, July 20, 1861.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, July 22, 1861. (Letter begun July 21st.)

<sup>12</sup> Fort McHenry, Baltimore, August 4, 1861. (Letter begun August 3d.)

<sup>13</sup> "On Tuesday I shall owe for two weeks board, [with the sutler] about \$7.00." *Ibid.*, October 18, 1861.

<sup>14</sup> On board Steamer Baltic, December 10, 1861. (Letter begun December 6th.)

Col., Lt. Col., Major, Chaplain, Quarter Master, Adjutant, and Col.'s clerk. The Doctors are  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile away and eat at the Hospital. We have a good 'plain cook' whom we hire by the month end who gets up superb meals—plain but excellent. We had at dinner yesterday, soup, baked beans, roast beef, mashed potatoes, coffee with milk and sugar, and warm biscuits, all not only good but excellent in quality. For tea we had biscuit and butter and apple sauce, cold ham & cold beef with coffee. This morning we had beefsteak, mashed potatoes, warm biscuits etc. At noon today we had nice apple pie of home manufacture. All our provisions are neatly prepared and look as well as they taste, so that we fare not only well but sumptuously. We have good butter, lard, and prepared milk which is good. Our servants eat of the same after us, so that they fare well too."<sup>15</sup>

Expenses were rather heavy in operating such a mess,<sup>16</sup> although the officers were allowed to buy what they wanted of the commissary or quartermaster department, at cost. "Were it not for an equitable regulation which allows officers to purchase anything to eat or wear which can be found in the Commissary or quartermaster department, at cost, it would be hard to live on Santa Rosa. But we buy bread, beef, bacon, dried apples, dried peaches, vinegar, candles, sugar, coffee, tea, molasses, and even whiskey as cheap, & often cheaper, than we could in a grocery store at home. We can even get musket bars of Uncle Sam here."<sup>17</sup> "Yesterday we had an amusing time in scraping up money enough to pay our monthly bills for beef, fruit, tomatoes, pickles etc. at the Fort [Pickens]. We buy through the month on credit, and at the end of the month the bills must be met. The officers in this Regt. brought a good deal of money, but they are nearly drained now. Their bills are all paid for Jan., but if the paymaster doesn't come soon enough, the February bills will have to go. Col. Dodge of course has money but he keeps it. I have paid well up now but am just out. I am owing for supplies now some thirty dollars (\$30) or forty dollars (\$40), I presume, but the bills have not been presented."<sup>18</sup>

A smaller group formed a mess during the Virginia campaign of 1864. "The Adjutant, Maj. Thurber and myself mess together, and have Dan Hutchinson of Co. F. to cook for us. He

<sup>15</sup> Santa Rosa island, Fla., December 20, 1861.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, January 27, 1862. (Letter begun January 23d.)

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, February 5, 1862. (Letter begun January 31st.)

is a saloon cook, and is the best field cook we ever had. His failing is drink, but here it don't affect him. We left camp the other day expecting to have our wagons follow us into bivouac at night. But when we found ourselves without it, our saddlebags yielded us, for dinner, hard tack and ham, apple sauce, and coffee with sugar and milk. For supper we had hard tack and ham, apple sauce and coffee with sugar and milk. At the next breakfast, there was nice fried liver, toasted hard tack, and lobscouse.<sup>19</sup> Today, before our wagons came we had plenty of fresh meat, soft bread from Harper's Ferry, applesauce, coffee with milk, cheese, ginger cakes from the sutler's wagon, and desiccated potatoes, which last are most excellent. Our cook prepares all these promptly, and we cannot complain. Few officers, I think, live as well. We make it somewhat a study. Yet, we live very cheaply."<sup>20</sup>

Even these elaborate eating arrangements grew tiresome at times, however, and the officers purchased meals at private houses near the camps. Often, also, it was not possible to return to the encampment for meals and little groups of officers engaged meals with the people of the vicinity. On going out on picket duty, "We brought one day's rations and while I posted my guard the cooks went at the dinner. I had a mind to have a 'good full dinner' and went to a house near where I bespoke a broiled chicken. At dinner time I went over and ate broiled chicken, cold ham, new potatoes, hoeecake, two glasses of milk, and a nice large dish of raspberries and cream. After dinner I had a lemonade and bought and ate a quart of blackberries. For tea I had nice fish, apple preserves, fresh bread and butter, coffee with milk and sugar, and a glass of milk."<sup>21</sup>

"I supped last night on a piece of boiled beef and a cracker taken in my fingers, and I wanted something else for breakfast. So Lt. Mann and I went about three-quarters of a mile to the farm of Col. Jones, an 'F. F. V.' who gathered up his goods and

<sup>19</sup> Lobscouse is a sailor's dish consisting of salt meat stewed or baked with vegetables. Funk and Wagnall's *New Standard Dictionary*.

<sup>20</sup> Near Charlestown, Va., August 31, 1864.

"For our mess, we get plenty of fresh meat of which we have steak and stews, flour of which we make biscuits, sweet and not, pancakes, gravies, etc. Hard tack goes in the soups and sometimes in the pancakes, we get Irish potatoes fresh, and plenty of desiccated potatoes, ham, condensed milk, and even a little butter at a dollar for a can about the size of the condensed milk cans. Cheese also at fifty cents a pound. I think we live well enough." Near Berryville, Va., September 13, 1864.

<sup>21</sup> Mill Creek near Old Point Comfort, June 22, 1861.



his negroes and departed for Secessia on the advent of the troops here. One family of his slaves remains, and we went in and caught them at breakfast. We asked them what they could get for us. The old lady *sd* [said] she thought she could get us up a 'short hoe cake' (a kind of mixture of lard and flour baked in a spider before the fire), some 'hog fish' and tea with butter. So we begged her to go on while we looked about and quizzed her and hers about their history etc. . . . This couple live on the farm and use its products as they like. . . . Our 'short hoe cake' at last got done and we sat down. The bill of fare was fish, cold Johany cake, short-hoe-cake, three eggs for two, butter and tea. I was hungry, and although the short cake was heavy indigestible stuff and tasted much of lard, I ate heartily. The tea was very good though clear. When we got through I got up and told them we hadn't either of us a cent to pay them. This took them somewhat aback, but as I assured them we were not imposing upon them and would pay them the next time we came down on picket, they professed themselves satisfied. But I have no doubt they inwardly set down that breakfast, got up with care and pains out of their scanty stores, in their account of 'Profit and Loss'. . . . Luckily a \$10 bill from father came to-day and I shall see the old folks paid soon."<sup>22</sup>

By these various means, the officers and men strove to vary the monotony and paucity of army fare and lighten the hardships of campaigning.

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<sup>22</sup> Camp Hamilton, Va., July 20, 1861.

## CHAPTER IV

### CAMP LIFE

#### ROUTINE

The sharp roll of the reveille was beaten by the drummers at daybreak each morning, at an hour varying from 4.30 to 5.30<sup>1</sup> according to circumstances. Sometimes, however, it was sounded as early as 1.30 or 2.00 a. m.<sup>2</sup> under the stress of campaigning or danger of a sudden daybreak attack by the rebels. During Sheridan's campaign of August and September 1864, in the Shenandoah valley, orders were regularly issued that the men should stand to arms from before dawn until after sunrise,<sup>3</sup> to prevent the possibility of a surprise attack on the camps. Roll call ensued,<sup>4</sup> and after the reports of the sergeants to the officers in charge of the companies, the men were given the next half hour for making their toilets and cleaning up camp.<sup>5</sup> A strenuous drill in company or battalion formation occupied the next two hours,<sup>6</sup> when the men were quite ready for the coarse but hearty breakfast which was served between 7 and 8 o'clock.<sup>7</sup>

"At ½ past 8 the sick go to the Surgeon" for sick detail<sup>8</sup> and treatment. About 9 o'clock a new detail of troops went on duty as sentinels,<sup>9</sup> both pickets<sup>10</sup> and inner camp guards<sup>11</sup> to relieve the force which had been under arms on such service for the preceding 24 hours. Dress parade lasting "half an hour or so" came at 10 and then the weary men were given their leisure until 5 o'clock in the afternoon.<sup>12</sup> Later on, however, the need of more drill was shown and the hours for recreation were shortened. Drill in

<sup>1</sup> Albany Barracks, Albany, N. Y., May 5, 1861.

Camp Hamilton, near Hampton, Va., June 8, 1861.

<sup>2</sup> Tennallytown, D. C., August 13, 1864.

<sup>3</sup> Near Berryville, Va., September 6, 1864.

<sup>4</sup> Fort McHenry, Baltimore, August 10, 1861.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, October 16, 1861. (Letter begun October 12th.)

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Camp Hamilton, Va., June 20, 1861. (Letter begun June 18th.)

<sup>8</sup> Camp Hamilton, Hampton, Va., June 20, 1861. (Letter begun June 18th.)

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, July 3, 1861. (Letter begun July 2d.)

<sup>10</sup> The picket guards were posted at various points at distances of one to two miles from camp, forming a cordon around the main encampment to prevent surprise. Companies were detailed each 24 hours at each post.

<sup>11</sup> The guards for the camp formed an inner line about the position but were used chiefly as police for the encampment under command of the "Officer of the guard."

<sup>12</sup> Camp Hamilton, Va., June 20, 1861. (Letter begun June 18th.)

various formations, company, battalion and regimental, occupied the time from 5 until 7 or later. Dinner at noon, and supper at 4.30 p. m. with tattoo and taps at 9.30,<sup>13</sup> completed the regular day of the soldier while in a more or less permanent camp. Officers were further required to put in extra time in special drill, and officers' school in the evenings. Much routine work was required of them, also, in the issuing of passes, making out of muster and pay rolls, and keeping of regimental and company records.<sup>14</sup>

On Sundays inspection<sup>15</sup> by companies and regiments broke the monotonous course of daily work, and when a chaplain was with the regiment, as was often the case, services were held in camp morning or evening.<sup>16</sup> Sometimes the force was drawn up on the parade ground and one service was held for the entire body of men, while on other occasions each chaplain held services for the men of his own regiment.<sup>17</sup>

When the Civil War broke out in April 1861, the regular army of the United States numbered between thirteen thousand<sup>18</sup> and twenty thousand men<sup>19</sup> scattered all over the country in various posts and more or less disorganized by resignations of officers who were southern sympathizers. Each state, of course, maintained regiments of militia, which had a certain amount of military training and could be relied upon for a limited number of partially trained men available for use as officers for volunteer regiments, but the North was forced to rely almost wholly on

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, July 21, 1861.

<sup>14</sup> Fort McHenry, Baltimore, October 16, 1861. (Letter begun October 12th.)

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, October 27, 1861.

<sup>16</sup> "At nine o'clock all the companies, some 20 in all, gathered under the command of their respective officers, in front of our building, on the parade ground, in presence of thousands, where in the beautiful sunlight, under the open heavens, morning prayers were had. The exercises were solemn and impressive. The Rev. Dr. Rogers, mounted on a cannon, read a psalm, led the voices in singing Old Hundred, and after a few earnest remarks, offered up a prayer. The dear ones at home were . . . first affectionately remembered in such terms as brought tears to many an eye, the country, the president, the good cause, the soldiers, the officers, and all were prayed for in such a simple earnest way that every heart joined in the petitions." Albany Barracks, N. Y., May 5, 1861.

<sup>17</sup> Santa Rosa island, Fla., December 22, 1861. (Letter begun December 20th.)

<sup>18</sup> The report of the Secretary of War on June 30, 1860, shows 12,984 men in the regular army. *Senate Documents*, 2d Session 36th Congress (1860-61), 2:298, No. 1.

<sup>19</sup> On December 1, 1861, the estimated total of men in the regular army of the United States was 20,334. *Senate Executive Documents*, 2d Session 37th Congress, (1861-1862), 2:4, No. 1. Report of Secretary of War.

volunteer forces called into service by the proclamation of April 15, 1861. These men were entirely untrained in army maneuvers and required much drilling before they were an effective force. The elective officer system also hampered the quick formation of an efficient army, since in many cases the officers chosen knew no more of company and battalion movement than the men in the ranks. Their one idea was to fight and defeat the enemy as soon as possible, and the Battle of Bull Run or Manassas showed the result.

"Our Capt. don't know anything and won't learn nor try seriously to learn. He keeps out of the way and leaves me to attend to all the details of business. We came here 24 hours ago and have paid no attention yet to the orders in relation to roll-calls, parades, or anything of the sort. I suppose this p. m. at 5 o'clock I shall muster the company and command them at 'full dress parade' as it is called."<sup>20</sup> "Capt. Catlin is not doing much in the way of posting himself in military tactics. He conducts the men to and from dinner or supper with some grace and propriety, but so far as drilling is concerned, he does nothing. I am working at it some and learning a little."<sup>21</sup>

Only a comparatively short time elapsed between the date when Company H was first organized, April 18th, and June 6th, when it arrived in a hostile country and encamped near Hampton, Va. Drilling was almost continuous during this period<sup>22</sup> and the men learned to move in company and battalion formation fairly well, but the time was too short to put them into good shape for service. "My greatest anxiety now is about the drill of our men who need a month's steady labor. If our company were not good, willing, faithful fellows, we should be far behind the rest of the Regiment but as it is we hold our own very well."<sup>23</sup> "I have been up and at work 2 hours and a half this morning drilling our men."<sup>24</sup>

Gradually the hours devoted to military training were lengthened and the leisure hours curtailed, for "it is Col. Alford's ambition to get up a regiment fit for fine parades. He was overheard by Henry Jewett to say last night that he was going to stay here and fill up to 900 men, and then train them until they

<sup>20</sup> Albany, N. Y., April 29, 1861. (Letter begun April 28th.)

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, May 8, 1861.

<sup>22</sup> New York City, May 21, 1861.

<sup>23</sup> Hampton, Va., June 11, 1861. (Letter begun June 10th.)

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, June 20, 1861. (Letter begun June 18th.)

should be the best drilled regiment in the service. I do not believe we can be beaten now.”<sup>25</sup> Reviews were held very frequently before the commanding officers of the force and parades were a daily occurrence. “At 4½ o’clock (yesterday) we mustered for Review and marched a mile or so down towards the Fort where Gen. Butler reviewed us. It was a fine display for the Glorious Fourth on the Old Virginia soil, and at its close the three Regiments closed in mass and Gen. Butler made a most beautiful though brief oration. He made a most appropriate allusion to the peculiar circumstances of our gathering and exhorted us nobly to our duty to friend and foes. The whole Review was very pleasant.”<sup>26</sup> “There are four parades daily at which one must be, three of them drills of near two hours each.”<sup>27</sup>

Life was not so regular, however, on the march in the course of a campaign. The reveille might be sounded at any hour, and movement of the troops begun without time for getting breakfast.<sup>28</sup> With a short halt for dinner of coffee and hardtack supplied from the haversacks, the march would be continued, often till long after dark, when bivouac had to be hastily made and supper prepared as late as 10 or 11 p. m.<sup>29</sup> At any time might come the order which would send them out in battle line with slight warning, for attack or defense. On the advance, constant vigilance was necessary, with a resulting heavy strain on the nerves of officers and men. Such then was the routine of a soldier, more or less monotonous while in permanent camp, but uncertain and nerve-racking during campaigns.

#### PICKET AND GUARD DUTY

Two sets of guards were used to protect an encampment from a surprise attack, the pickets who were stationed at some distance out from the camp,<sup>30</sup> and the guard which formed an inner line about the position. “I can write but a little to you and under the most annoying circumstances. At this moment I am sitting on the ground in front of the guard tent, in the front line of our camp. . . . Our sleeping soldiery are now in my care, as

<sup>25</sup> Fort McHenry, Baltimore, October 12, 1861.

<sup>26</sup> Camp Hamilton, Va., July 5, 1861. (Letter begun July 4th.)

<sup>27</sup> Fort McHenry, Baltimore, October 12, 1861.

<sup>28</sup> Near Snicker’s Gap, Va., August 19, 1864. Letter begun August 17th.)

<sup>29</sup> Near Charlestown, Va., September 4, 1864. (Letter begun September 2d.)

<sup>30</sup> Near Hampton, Va., June 7, 1861. (Letter begun June 6th.)

officer of the guard, and I am writing to keep my eyes open. . . . I have just been out quite around our camp, walking near a mile and a half of walking in the night over all sorts of things [—?] [seeing] how our sentinels watch their posts. I found them all right and have come back to the guard tent to rest my limbs a little but I cannot go to sleep a moment until nine o'clock tomorrow. . . . You do not know how tired I am. It does seem as if I could not sit up, and as I write here (it is now the gray light of morning about half past 4 o'clock) my eyes will shut and blur and my head nod against my will.”<sup>31</sup>

“It takes 100 men daily to guard our camp, and would take no more if we had 1,500 men in it. The guard do not sleep for 24 hours, and are changed at 4 p. m. every day. Where 1/3 of our men are sick, and a new detail of 140 men (40 for picket guard) have to be detailed every day, it is not a long job to wear the well ones down.”<sup>32</sup> Regiments were detailed in turn for picket duty for 24 hours and platoons or companies posted at different points. “I have seated myself on an old box at half past eleven this beautiful night . . . to write to you. . . . My face is turned toward the Southeast-ward towards ‘Old Point’ on which lies Fortress Monroe, its walls in grand relief against the sky, keeping watch and ward for us all.”

“Behind me, and on either hand are plantations, farm houses and negro huts, some deserted and some occupied as ever.

“Near me watches a faithful sentry, and along the road behind me is a line of them leading back nearly to camp. Close by me are two or three sleepers, and in a little house at my left are a dozen more of your friends and mine. . . . Off at my right are the camps of our friends, and at my left is the enemy’s country, and the road stretching away to Yorktown.

“Our Regiments here all take turns in doing picket duty — that is in keeping guard out some distance beyond the lines. Today it came to the 3rd Regiment and I was sent with twenty-three men to hold and guard ‘Mill Creek.’ We came down here a mile and a half or so from Camp and relieved the old guard — (I was broken off then by a sudden discharge of fire-arms, and my sentinel coming down the road on a run crying, ‘Turn out the Guard.’ ‘Turn out the Guard.’ The fright of one or two of them was ludicrous to see. I turned out the Guard, left the

<sup>31</sup> Camp Hamilton, Va., June 12, 1861.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, June 19, 1861. (Letter begun June 18th.)

Sergeant to march it up the road and went up to see what was the cause of so much noise. I found that the original alarm was not at my post, and I replaced my sentries, and sat down at the farthest outpost to see what would follow. After being nearly devoured by mosketoos and seeing nothing, I came in and conclude my sentence by saying —) about 10 o'clock. We brought one day's rations and while I posted my guard, the cooks went at the dinner."<sup>33</sup>

"Every four nights I am walking lonely roads, and by-paths in these interminable labyrinthine forests, in constant peril of life and limb from the malice of enemies or the stupidity of friends. . . .

"Yesterday we were out on picket duty again. We had the same place as before, though a new bower, and spent the day very pleasantly. . . . About nine o'clock in the evening I was lying down, fighting mosketoos and 'punkies'<sup>34</sup> when we heard *Crack! Crack! Crack!* from the rifles of our sentries. I jumped up, took three men and hurried out to find out what was the matter, while Capt. Jenny in command, followed with the guard. We pushed briskly out, keeping a sharp lookout for signs of an ambush (for which no forests in the world are better adapted than these) and finally found our boys who had seen a couple of men approaching through a cornfield, challenged them and fired. We posted the guards anew, cautioned them to lock sharp, aim low, and shoot to kill, and went back and lay down. But you have no idea how the mosketoos and 'punkies' did bite. I was as if on a gridiron and got little or no sleep. . . . On one post I found a 'solitary horseman' had been reconnoitering our pickets. I got at the truth of this as well as I could and had just set down to rest (now 3 o'clock and daybreak) when 'crack' went a rifle on my right. I ran down to the post and found the poor sentry half scared to death — the woods were all alive in his imagination. But he pretended to have seen three men come out of the bushes on the opposite side of the road from him and but a few steps from him, whom he had shot at. I doubted his story, but put a trusty man in his place and put him where he would be safer. Then I set off to post men so as to surround the wood. As I tramped around through the solitary paths and through the fields, I confess

<sup>33</sup> Mill Creek near Old Point Comfort, Va., June 22, 1861.

<sup>34</sup> "Punkies" were a species of tiny gnats. Funk and Wagnall's *New Standard Dictionary*.

I was a little afraid of a sly bullet, to stop me, . . . but none came. In a few minutes there was a chain around the woods, but I had some doubts of the man's story of the three men, and I decided to wait until daylight, test his truthfulness, and shake up the bush. At daylight we made a careful examination and distinctly saw traces of men in the bushes, plain boot tracks. So I thickened my guard around the woods, got a squad of 25 men, formed a line clear across one end of the woods, gave the word 'March' and plunged into the brush. We carefully examined it . . . , and came out on the other end in about one-half an hour very wet and somewhat tired. The men were not to be found and had got out scemewhere, which was not strange, as the piece of woods they were in was surrounded on three sides by woods separated from it only by a narrow and winding road of a single track's width.<sup>35</sup>

Firing by the pickets was very common, and wild alarms of this sort occurred often.<sup>36</sup> These rifle shots did serve one purpose, however, that of showing that the pickets were on the watch, and keeping track of any movements which might be made. One of the most ludicrous of these alarms occurred on January 26, 1862, during the time the Seventy-fifth was stationed on Santa Rosa island.

Several of the officers had been off on an excursion down the island, partly for a picnic, and partly to see if the Confederates had moved their outposts any closer to the Union position, and they were coming home by boat in the evening. "Suddenly a racket shot up from the Water Witch [one of the United States' gunboats on patrol duty off the coast] and in a moment more 'Crack! Crack! Crack!' went the muskets from the distant picket line on land, mistaking a signal for a pilot for an alarm from the mounted patrol. The steamer Mississippi lying off shore here answered the signal by another racket, and 'Crack! Crack!! Crack!!!' went the muskets of the pickets again. By this time the mounted patrol down the island took alarm, and

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<sup>35</sup> Camp Hamilton, Va., July 11, 1861.

<sup>36</sup> "We had an alarm out on picket at daylight this morning and for a few minutes I was sure our pickets were being driven in. I was in charge of Post 3, and as the scattering crack of some half dozen rifles resounded through the woods like the firing of sentinels being driven in, I turned out my guard and hurried up in the 'double quick' with about 30 men. I expected every moment as I went up to see an enemy but it turned out to be only the old guard firing off their pieces as they were relieved on the post next to me." *Ibid.*, July 23, 1861. (Letter begun July 21st.)



sent up a rocket which is a signal agreed on that the enemy are on the island. Away went a half dozen shots from the picket guard again. Of course we understood that there was no cause for alarm, but we knew that our absence, coupled with such extraordinary demonstrations would make a terrible excitement in camp, and we hurried in, but it was eight o'clock before we were hailed by the guard, and after recognition set foot on sand. Meanwhile, Col. Brown<sup>37</sup> and his officers at the Fort understood the whole thing as we did, but the mounted patrol, excited by the sight of the rebel vessels we had seen, the unusual fire over at Pensacola, and some little whiskey, kept sending in a messenger at full speed every half hour with new and increasing tales of danger and disaster, until our picket guard was wild with fear and two of them on the beach deserted their posts. 'The pickets had been fired on and one man shot!' 'The enemy were already on the island and two of the mounted patrol were missing!' 'The officers of the 75th had been attacked and the Major and Capt. Dwight taken prisoners!' (This story came very direct to the Col. about a minute before I got on my horse to join the battalion and report for duty). 'The guard had been overpowered and fled into camp!' And to cap the climax of absurd fright, one of the mounted patrol came down the beach at a full run on his mule, out of breath, shouting to the sentries on the beach as he came along, 'Run! G'd d—n you! The enemy are close behind! If you can't get to camp, hide in the bushes! Run for your life G'd d—n you!' It was no wonder two or three of the volunteers deserted their posts and ran in.

"Meanwhile, our Regt. and Col. Wilson's turned out under arms and 'stood in battle array.' Col. Brown had warned them that it was a false alarm, but as a matter of precaution to be ready, and so they were. Of course they were agitated by all sorts of fears for us, and were glad enough to see us, I assure you. Questions & congratulations flowed in upon us in heaps, and the whole affair was soon explained from first to last.

"But the rebels were as badly scared as we. The sloop & schooner had got in & reported armed parties & unusual fires, down the Island, and the rockets and signals, of red, green, white and blue lights on the *Water Witch* and *Niagara* alarmed them immensely. The long roll<sup>38</sup> beat first at Fort McRea and our

<sup>37</sup> Colonel Brown was the regular army officer in command at Fort Pickens, and as senior colonel, commandant on the island.

<sup>38</sup> The long roll was the assembly signal, to call the force out in battle line.

people here heard it quickly rattling all along their whole line for four miles. I presume ten thousand men were got under arms in half an hour, from half past seven to eight o'clock. How the rebels settled it and when they went to bed, we don't know, but our troops all had 'tattoo' and 'taps' for roll call and lights out at the usual hour."<sup>39</sup>

While stationed at Fort McHenry, Baltimore, the officers were required to take turns as officer of the guard at the fort. "We are on guard for 24 hours once in four days, or one fourth of the time."<sup>40</sup> "By 7 o'clock . . . the heat was very oppressive, but after breakfast, I had to put on my dress coat, button it up to the chin, don my epaulets, and buckle on sword, belt, sash and pistol, and undertake the duties of 'Officer of the Guard.' We have 'Guard Mounting' which is a sort of Parade of the guard at 8 o'clock, and then I have to come to the guard house and stay 24 hours.

"Here the guard house is a little 7 by 9 projection on the inside of the wall of the Fort Enclosure by the main gate. It is garnished by one rough, dirty, unpainted table and one chair. It has two apertures for windows and we are occasionally so fortunate as to get a cool breeze through it. Here I sit, 'perked up in a glittering grief,' suffocating under arms and uniform which I must not lay off. My shirt was long since all wet, and my gloves so saturated that I had to take them off. My stockings, pants, coat and vest are nearly full but still the sun pours down."<sup>41</sup> The escape of a prisoner early in October caused increased vigilance in the guard, and the officer was required to patrol the walls all night, in spite of bad weather.<sup>42</sup> Each night complete preparations were made at Fort McHenry to receive an enemy in case of attack, although no hostile force was known to be near, and such arrangements for defense were under the supervision of the officer of the guard.

"We have just turned the last key, put up a temporary chevaux de frise at the outer gate of the Fort proper, and shut out all the world. The commander-in-chief of the American Army could not now come into the Fort but must wait outside till morning. A score of men are in each bastion of the Fort,

<sup>39</sup> Santa Rosa island, Florida, January 26, 1862. (Letter begun January 23d.)

<sup>40</sup> Fort McHenry, Baltimore, October 12, 1861.

<sup>41</sup> Fort McHenry, Baltimore, August 4, 1861. (Letter begun August 3d.)

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, October 11, 1861. (Letter begun October 10th.)

the artillery men are at their guns, the guns are shotted, and everything is ready to meet an attack—an attack which is as likely to happen here as in Homer [New York], and no more so. The rain has set in steadily and there will be a rainy night. I shall lie down on a hard board which covers a box by my side with my overcoat under my head and try to rest if not to sleep.

(Monday morning). “A dark rainy morning and dreary enough. But I feel well and hopeful this morning. I lay down on my box last night with my head on my overcoat and my sword in my arms (the regulations forbidding us while on guard to take off arms or accoutrements, and went to sleep. I awoke towards morning shivering with damp and cold, and feared I had caught a cold, but I put my cape over me and went to sleep again, only to wake up in time for Reveille at 4½ o’clock with no cold or ill of any sort.”<sup>43</sup>

Besides the officer of guard, there was a field officer of the day, a major or perhaps a lieutenant-colonel, who had general supervision over all the guards of the camp, and he usually made a “grand round”<sup>44</sup> or tour of inspection of the sentries about midnight. “A little after midnight it began to rain, and I had a tedious time visiting my guards [as field officer of the day]. Now the sharp sand would cut my face and fill my eyes like a hail of broken glass, and then the big drops of rain would assault me almost as sharply as the sand. The moon was hid, and the gale had blown the water so far upon the beach on both sides of the Island [Santa Rosa] that I had to flounder along on my frightened pony in constant danger of a fall. I got around however by daybreak and took a good sleep of two or three hours before breakfast.”<sup>45</sup>

Picket and guard duty thus entailed a large amount of extra work coupled with loss of sleep for a period of 24 hours, very often, when the force so protected was relatively small.

#### SCOUTING SERVICE AND RECONNOISSANCE

Closely allied with picket duty was scout and reconnoissance service in the protection of a camp or military force from surprise. These small bodies of troops scoured the country for several miles

<sup>43</sup> Fort McHenry, Baltimore, August 11, 1861.

<sup>44</sup> Santa Rosa island, Florida, March 31, 1862. (Letter begun March 24th.)

<sup>45</sup> Santa Rosa island, Florida, April 12, 1862. (Letter begun April 7th.)

in every direction beyond the picket line, bringing back information of the enemy's movements and occasionally picking up a few prisoners caught on similar service. The force sent out varied from a few men or a platoon, to several companies or even a regiment if there was to be a "reconnaissance in force." "On Saturday Capt. Smith with one company went out to look up and guard a bridge, and on Sunday our company was sent out to carry them provisions and scout abroad after the enemy. We hurried off and I dropped my pen in order to go. We walked five or six miles to reach them, through woods, by-roads and marshes, and reached them about 11½ o'clock. After dinner, I took a squad of ten resolute fellows and went on further beating about to see if we could find traces of our enemies, and to look over the country. We must have travelled some 8 or 10 miles and got back to the little camp about 5 o'clock safe and sound.

"We traversed a beautiful country and there was excitement enough in looking for armed enemies to make it very interesting. We found several scouts of our friends but no enemies."<sup>46</sup> "We lost three men over beyond Hampton yesterday. A small scouting party of six went out, and in returning fell into an ambush by which a Major Rawlings, brother of the Rawlings of the Illustrated papers was killed and two were wounded and taken prisoners. Three escaped. I do not know to what regiment the men belonged. We have a man of our company now out as a scout or spy within the enemy's lines."

"Just before the rain began [referring to a storm which he has described] our scout (whom we heard this p. m. had fallen into the hands of the rebels) came in with a whole skin. He had several hair breadth 'scapes and saw some enemies. He has been out in the woods three nights with five comrades,—last night with one.

"He is a great genius, named *Fiddis*, a visionary fellow, always planning some mystery and in fact making mysteries out of the commonest things. We call him 'the Scout' from his propensity for scouting."<sup>47</sup>

During the time the Seventy-fifth was encamped on Santa Rosa island, Florida, various scouting expeditions were sent down the island to prevent an attack from the rear. "This morning two companies were sent down the Island to make an 'armed

<sup>46</sup> Camp Hamilton, Va., June 11, 1861. (Letter begun June 8th.)

<sup>47</sup> Camp Hamilton, Va., July 20, 1861.

reconnaissance'— a company of the artillery and a company of the 6th Reg't. with three guns and provisions for five days. Four deserters came over today, and one of them is to be sent down in a schooner tonight in hopes to guide them to take three companies of rebels down about 30 miles." <sup>48</sup> No results were obtained by this party, however. A similar expedition was sent out from Pensacola May 27, 1862, in order to capture a Confederate picket guard stationed some distance out from the city.

"Three expeditions are to be out tonight, one of which I lead. . . . I am to leave on the steamer Gen. Meigs at midnight to attempt to capture a picket guard or two, and I may, of course, see some little skirmish."

"We got away on our expedition at midnight, and everything went off in good order according to the Programme except the rebels *who left too soon*. We first landed a party at Gassing (pronounced Gassong) Pt. and scoured a tract of country supposed to contain a rebel picket.

"This, owing to misinformation delayed us a little, and it was a quarter after three before we got up stream and went on to a place on the Escambia Bay known as 'Gull Pt.', which we reached at daylight. We got into the launches and ashore in the face of a house where we were informed the enemy were. It was just the gray of morning, on the hill in front of us was a light shown by the guard, in the East the day was coming out gloriously, on the water was our line of boats crowded with soldiers and sailors, the sailors striving which boat should first touch the sand. It was an inspiring scene, and there was just enough danger in it to make one's spirits rise as in intoxication. We were ashore in a moment, formed quickly, and surrounded the house only to find it empty. We had then only to push on to another supposed station. I followed the guide, followed with great difficulty by the soldiers through a thick bush, in a circuit of a mile or more to the place, dubious of any results for I had already voted the guide a humbug. It was a weary mile and we surrounded another house. This was the wrong house, and not twenty rods from us the rebels to the number of 6 or 8 had just left, in such haste as to leave their pork and fresh fish frying on the fire. We felt mortified enough and vexed to think we had failed, but the fault was in the mistake of the guide. Our men did well, and

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<sup>48</sup> Santa Rosa island, Florida, March 27, 1862. (Letter begun March 24th.)

we did everything promptly. But we couldn't come it. We got back to the city about 7 o'clock. Col. Meritt took four companies out to Oakfield on a reconnaissance, attacked a small picket, killed one man, wounded one, captured three horses and saddles, two shot guns and a saber. No one was hurt on our side."<sup>49</sup>

These raids, then, served several purposes; first, to obtain information by observation and capture of prisoners; second, to force back Confederate outposts near Union positions; and third, to break the monotony of camp and garrison life, by giving the men active service with slight danger in it.

#### MARCHES

Picket duty and scouting were hard on the men, as they involved loss of sleep, and a certain amount of marching, but there was always an element of the unknown in them. Pickets were always stationed at points from which an attack was likely to come, and scouting expeditions were sent out for the purpose of locating the enemy and getting information of his movements. Long, continued marches, on the other hand, were largely a matter of the endurance and physical condition of the men.

The Third regiment found itself overtaxed by the long march to Great Bethel, followed by a battle and a retreat, all on the same day, June 11, 1861. Company H had been out on a scouting expedition, in the course of which it had gone a number of miles, and had just returned to camp. "I flung myself on my mattress, but had to get up at once and pack my trunk and roll my overcoat ready for a march which it was said was on foot. We directed the men to sleep on their arms and be ready to march at a moment's warning, and a little after nine o'clock I threw myself on my mattress and tried to get a little sleep. A little after ten o'clock the long roll of the drum started us from our sleep and I jumped up and was armed in a minute. The men were very quick in line with rifles loaded. But we were delayed a long time to get three days' rations. It was two o'clock nearly before we got fairly off. We went to Hampton and were put across the creek by Colonel Bartlett's Naval Brigade. The expedition was for an attack upon a fortified place near New Bethel Church, and was made up of our regiment, of Col.

<sup>49</sup> Pensacola, Fla., May 28, 1862. (Letter begun May 25th.)

Allen's, and Col. Duryea's Regiments from here, and of detachments of five companies from each of three regiments at Newport News.

"The plan was to attack the enemy on all sides at daybreak, drive in their pickets and surprise them. But we did not get across the creek until a quarter to three, and it soon began to be light. Col. Duryea's Regiment of Zouaves was ahead of us several miles and one Regt. after us. We pushed on rapidly a good deal of the time at the double quick step which is a sort of dog trot. Our men were very much fatigued, and several were exhausted and dropped out of ranks before we got to New Market Bridge some four or five miles. . . . [As the regiment was marching along the road, it was fired upon by another Union regiment from ambush by mistake, and several killed and wounded.]

"Here we found Col. Duryea and most of the troops from Newport News, and after a little rest started, and sending our dead and wounded back we pushed on. It was now seven o'clock. By nine o'clock we were near the New Bethel Church, and halted a few minutes for rest. After resting a moment the artillery, of which we had three guns, was sent forward and soon engaged the enemy. We were drawn up in line of battle  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile from the redoubt and could see and hear the fight commence. . . . After firing some fifteen minutes and killing quite a number, we retreated. . . . After a few minutes' rest we again formed right under fire from their cannon and moved back to our original position. The men were worn out. Scores of them sank down unable to carry a gun a step farther. Several cases of sunstroke took place.

"About one o'clock we got a few minutes' rest and started back home. It seemed to me that I could not put one foot before the other. But to walk 10 miles was what I did not imagine I could do. It was hot and dusty and I had my heavy overcoat to carry and one of the men's heavy overcoats, besides my sword, a haversack and canteen. Slowly we came on, feeling as if every mile was the very last, until seven o'clock when I got into my tent in health and with life. We would not have imagined we could do what we did. As near as I can tell, I marched about 20 miles Sunday, [on the scouting expedition] and 25 miles yesterday, and all without more than half an hour's sleep and

very little rest. I ate only one good meal during the time, but lived on crackers and water."<sup>50</sup>

When the Union forces from Santa Rosa island landed on the mainland across the channel from Fort Pickens, after the evacuation of Pensacola on the night of May 9, 1862, they still had a long march to make, before they could enter the city and take possession. "Our march to Pensacola was a rather hot, dusty, weary one of some 10 or 12 miles. The men, however, were all in fine spirits, and many men and officers who have long been sick were now pushing on bravely. I was mounted, and though I was a little ashamed of it, I did inwardly congratulate myself that I was now a field officer just for its exemptions from fatigue. Of course I rode easily but finally got off and gave my seat to the Leader of the Band who was getting exhausted. I carried a musket so for a mile or more. The first *house* we came to was a negro hut, but frocks and all sorts of female garments (. . .) were out drying on the fence, and you would have laughed yourself half to death to hear the jokes and remarks as the men passed by. . . . We made two or three short halts, and reached the outskirts of Pensacola about six o'clock. Here another halt was made, the ranks closed up, the Band and field music sent to the front, dust brushed off a little and white gloves put on. Then the word 'forward!' came down the lines, and we went briskly on to the tune of Yankee Doodle. The streets we passed through were very shabby but any town looked splendid to us, and our elation formed a striking contrast to the sour looks and downcast faces of the white people who stood in small groups on the corners or furtively peeped out of the closed blinds. A few houses were open, but stores, hotels, and most dwellings were closed. . . . We marched to the plaza and formed a line around it with artillery and the General's staff in front. A party of marines from the gunboat 'Maria Wood' landed and formed also facing the great flag-staff and the ruins of a gallows built here for unionists on the 1st April. . . . While I was gone [Major Babcock had been detailed to post guard details at the principal points of the town] the stars and stripes were sent to the top of the flagstaff, and saluted with one gun and with three cheers from the soldiers and sailors and a good number of the bystanders."<sup>51</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Hampton, Va., June 11, 1861. (Letter begun June 8th.)

<sup>51</sup> Pensacola, Fla., May 14, 1862.



The campaign into the Teche country of Louisiana commencing in January, 1863, and ending in May of that year when the army was ordered to Port Hudson, was a very heavy strain on officers and men. The advance was steady, day after day, and the distances covered were remarkable through a poorly watered country.

"We had a smart march of seven miles yesterday morning over a beautiful road to St. Martinsville, ten miles from New Iberia. . . . Leaving St. Martinsville we came out upon an immense prairie, and had a weary, dusty march to a bayou about a dozen miles from here, where we had to halt a couple of hours for a bridge to be built. We crossed about 4 P. M. and pushed on four miles more, over the most beautiful rolling plains I ever saw. . . . We found the water poor and our men were terribly thirsty and footsore when at six o'clock we stopped for the night and bivouacked. . . .

"At six o'clock, [the next morning] we formed a line of illfed cross, weary, footsore men and marched six or seven miles to within one mile of Vermillion River where a bridge has been burnt, and here we rest until tomorrow — a most welcome day of rest to men and horses. . . . Our route to Opelousas, for two days' march, lies through a rolling prairie region, with only brackish water in muddy pools here and there. I expect much suffering and some loss. We have made many windings on our way thus far and have made large marches.

"On Wednesday we marched from Franklin to Jeannerette's, 18 miles, Thursday to a point this side of New Iberia 20 miles, Friday 20 miles. Today about six or seven miles. With plenty of water the road would be fine. As it is, after a breeze comes up in the morning, so as to blow the dust away, we shall go very comfortably. In the vicinity of Opelousas, the water is good. Beyond for three or four days' march, we shall find the water poor. We are bound to Alexandria, and if we have good luck shall be there in about five days."<sup>52</sup>

"We left camp near Vermillion River where I wrote my last letter to you, at six o'clock yesterday morning in a most terrific rain. . . . We formed our line at six o'clock, and moved off to the ford over the river while Nim's battery fired a salute in commemoration of the battle of Lexington in the old time and the shedding of Massachusetts blood in the new. [April 19,

<sup>52</sup> Near Vermillion river, April 18, 1863.

1775, and April 19, 1861, at Baltimore.] Oh how the rain poured down and the water rose up! The boys however plodded along, singing and joking in the jolliest of humors, through Vermillionville and over the prairies to the Northward. Before noon, the rain ceased so that after all it was a pleasant march. Wet to the skin, nothing could damp the spirits of the boys, and in spite of mud and rain we made 18 miles. We encamped last night in a lonesome prairie region about 12 miles the other side of Opelousas. At six o'clock today we were off again, but soon lost the road and have had a weary day, marching at least eighteen miles to get to this camp one mile North of Opelousas. We got here about five o'clock.

"We closed up our ranks and marched through the capital of Louisiana to the tune of Yankee Doodle, showing off the 75th in fine style. I confess to some pride as I looked back down the column and saw how fine and soldierly they looked. They were the only Regt. who did not fail on the march. We are to rest over one day and then I suppose go on again."<sup>53</sup>

A few days later "Our brigade had left camp Monday 2 P. M. [probably at Barré's Landing, some distance north of Opelousas] gone to Washington, waited four hours, then marched till 2 o'clock A. M. to catch Dwight, [the general in command of the brigade forming the advance] and then starting at six again, (reveille at 4) had pushed on some 25 miles on Tuesday. They marched at least 25 miles on Wednesday.

"Thursday morning I was waked at four o'clock by reveille, and the Gen. had intended to march at 5, but the order not having been sent around we did not get off till nearly six, and we pushed on. Cheneyville was the first place we passed, 32 miles from Alexandria. Gen. Dwight was some 8 miles ahead, but in the P. M. he stopping to repair a bridge, we caught his rear guard and passed by his long wagon train. Here Dwight marched eight miles without stopping, his cry being 'Weitzel's coming! Forward!'

"We kept on steadily until we got within 10 miles of Alex. a when we concluded to go into the place anyhow. So on we went. Dwight was about two miles ahead, seizing teams to carry his stragglers and footsore, an example which we followed diligently.

"About sunset we passed Gov. Moore's place some six miles

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<sup>53</sup> Opelousas, La., April 20, 1863.

from Alex. a, when my men began to crowd forward en mass, filling the road. Col. Thomas [of the Eighth Vermont] saw it and closed his regiment up in the same way. Now began a race. For four or five miles, singing, shouting, laughing, joking, our boys crowded on faster than my horse could walk, calling to the 8th Vt. to get out of the way and to me and the Adjutant to get fresh horses to go on out of the way." I think I never laughed more in one hour than I did there. In this way we reached Alex. a before eight o'clock, bringing nearly every man into camp, and arriving before Dwight had got his camp fires lighted.<sup>54</sup> It was ten o'clock before our wagon trains came up and we got supper."<sup>55</sup>

"We are again in camp from which with much labor, I wrote you before. We have had a weary march which could be described precisely like the famous one of the King of France.

"We left our camp here [at Alexandria] after dark on Saturday night and marched over onto the road where Gen. Dwight's

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<sup>54</sup> James Hall in his "Record of the 75th N. Y. Volunteers," page 103, says: "About an hour before sunset an Aid came riding up to Gen. Weitzel, who was riding alongside the 75th, and stated Gen Banks's desire that the troops should reach Alexandria that night, Porter having taken it with his fleet the day before. Knowing the condition of his men, Lieut.-Col. Babcock almost despaired of executing the orders he received to that effect.

"Discussing the predicament with Lieut. Thurber, [of Company A] who was at hand, he asked if some excitement could not be aroused to carry the men through. Thurber, in turn, appealed to a waggish fellow in his company to suggest an expedient. Without a moment's hesitation, the witty fellow stepped ahead of his comrades, raised aloft his musket, from the bayonet of which hung a huge turkey that he had picked up during the day and had carried through all the toil and heat, and shouted, 'Come on, boys! The one who gets into Alexandria ahead of me tonight can have this!' And with that he started on a double quick.

"The effect was irresistible, and with an enthusiastic cheer which surprised themselves as well as their officers, the men imitated his pace. A few minutes brought them to the rear of the Vermont regiment which had the lead. Therefore our boys showered them with such exclamations as 'Out of the way there, slow coaches! We're bound for Alexandria!'

"This exhibition of pluck roused the spirit of the Green Mountain Colonel. 'Boys,' said old Thomas, in his slow, dry way; 'boys, are you going to let the 75th New York get ahead of you?' Of course the brave old 8th was not to be outdone, and broke into a double-quick. This roused the enthusiasm of the other regiments, and they followed suit. Thus, on a full run, Weitzel's and Emory's commands charged into the suburbs of Alexandria, which they reached at ten o'clock. So completely exhausted were they, the men dropped to the ground almost at the moment they received the order to halt; and they went to sleep just wherever they fell." Hall *Cayuga in the Field*, part 2, p. 103.

Unfortunately Mr Hall does not tell where he got this story, and it is given here merely for comparison with the account given in Colonel Babcock's letters.

<sup>55</sup> Alexandria, La., May 9, 1863.

brigade was, some two and a half miles from Alex. *a* and some three miles or more from here. Bivouacking in a cornfield, sleeping only from two to three hours, we had reveille at three o'clock and marched at four on Sunday morning towards the 'Piney Woods'. We followed Bayou Rapides, in heat and dust, with much weariness, through a lovely looking cotton country for a dozen miles or so, when we came in sight of an elevated, rolling, woody plateau on our left, across the bayou, known as the 'Piney Woods'."

"Divided from bayou Rapides by a merely artificial embankment, is bayou Jean de Jean, running in an exactly opposite direction, which we followed until twenty-five and a half miles from Alexandria and near the Red River again when we halted for the night. We got into camp about five o'clock and had a good supper and rest, and the men were in fine spirits and condition on Monday morning to continue on after the enemy, but there was no move until three o'clock, when we were suddenly ordered on, the general having information from the cavalry to the effect that the enemy were not over twenty miles or so ahead of us, and we might catch them. We made a rapid march of six or seven miles while the general rode on to reconnoitre and found ourselves about three or four miles into the Pines, a hilly, sandy barren land, covered thinly with pines and a small oak undergrowth. It is very poorly watered and the prospect began to look gloomy. We waited here in the road until near nine o'clock when the General returned and ordered us back to our last camp, and we were informed that we were bound at once for Port Hudson, Gen. Hunter being already in the River. It was a weary exhausting march back, as indeed are all counter-marches. We got in late and had a poor supper, our baggage wagons, save one, having been ordered down to Alex. *a* in our absence. Yesterday morning at seven we started on our return to Alexandria by way of the River, and marched about nineteen miles to our former camp, reaching camp in time to get a good supper before dark. Our Regiment brought in a considerable many more men in ranks than the 160th [New York] and 8th Vt. together and had no stragglers who did not arrive with the wagon train, but it was a weary exhausting march, begun by jaded men and prosecuted without sufficient rest. Gen. Dwight's brigade led the way and straggled enormously.

"We have now averaged over 10 miles a day for a month and

our men and officers begin to show signs of hard work.”<sup>56</sup> When incidents occurred to break the monotony of plodding along mile after mile, the men felt the strain of the march less sharply. Such a thing happened in the course of the retreat from Alexandria. “We left our camp on the river above Alexandria on Sunday morning at four o’clock, and sending our trains and artillery ahead, set our faces towards the rear. The people of Alex. a had learned enough of our intentions to understand what our movement meant, and could hardly conceal their good humor at the idea of relief from the presence of the hated Yankee. . . .

“We marched out of Alexandria just before sunrise, the general intending to make about 20 miles, but the weather was fine and the march easy, and we had got twenty-five miles this side of the city before sunset, making a march of at least twenty-seven miles. The enemy had not appeared in sight in our rear yet. About two miles before we halted we passed a plantation where Major Chase in whose house General Arnold lived at Pensacola had resided since the war broke out. His negroes were all out to see us, and I had just sent my drum corps back to the middle of the Regiment to play a little while. As the music struck up, they began to dance as if crazy, and old women and young, boys and girls, women with babies in their arms and women wrinkled with age, crowded into the column and danced along with the march. The men gave way, and more than thirty of all shades and shapes joined by some soldiers, entertained us for a mile with a genuine fandango. The men forgot their fatigues and blistered feet, and cheered and shouted and laughed as if at a carnival, and it was the funniest and strangest scene I ever saw. All had on their Sunday suits and were the neatest body of colored people I have ever seen on a plantation. The soldiers all along the line caught it up and all the bands struck up so that we made the last of the march easier than the first.”<sup>57</sup>

Such were the distances required of an army on the march, day after day, carrying heavy rifles, haversacks and blankets. Is it any wonder that there was some straggling, and much weariness, under these conditions?

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<sup>56</sup> Alexandria, La., May 13, 1863.

<sup>57</sup> Near Bayou Boeuf, on Semmesport road, May 19, 1863.

## CHAPTER V

### TRANSPORTATION

The problem of moving men and supplies promptly to points where they were most needed, was always a difficult one, to be solved by the quartermaster's department. Where a railroad could be used, there was the question of available rolling stock for the required number of troops. But railroads were few in the South and such equipment as the Confederates could not take with them in a retreat, they burned and destroyed.<sup>1</sup> Transports were also in great demand, since a large body of troops had to be moved by water, either down the river or along the sea coast. Steamers were taken over in large numbers for this purpose, both river steamers and ocean-going vessels, but they were poorly equipped to handle the forces which were to be carried.<sup>2</sup>

"We got on the steamer [*Alida*] about 4 P. M. and soon got off [down the Hudson to New York]. There was a tremendous crowd to see us off — [from Albany]. It was an exciting exhilarating time to me. We brought a Brass Band with us and swung out from the landing with music and cheers and a forest of waving handkerchiefs. About 10 miles below the city we ran upon a bar and were detained until 9 o'clock. At  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 10, tired, restless, and suffering from a cold, I stretched my blanket on the floor with a cork life preserver for a pillow, and after a while got to sleep. At two o'clock I got up with a terrible cough and sore throat and went on deck. The night was cold, and the men were stretched out and cuddled up in all conceivable shapes sleeping and trying to sleep. In  $\frac{1}{2}$  an hour or so I stretched my bed again and slept until 4 o'clock when I got up and went on deck just as we had passed West Point. From that time we have had almost delightful trip. . . . I am now down in the after cabin, surrounded by swords, glasses, epaulets, whisky bottles, bouquets, sashes, drums, and boxes of all sorts of things. Some 20 gay young officers are around me

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<sup>1</sup> Colonel Babcock says nothing in his letters concerning the movement of troops by rail during the war and therefore that phase of transportation has not been taken up.

<sup>2</sup> Near Hampton, Va., June 6, 1861.

singing all sorts of songs, sentimental, convivial, comic and miscellaneous, striving to while away a dull day. Upon the decks are 700 men lounging about, reading, singing, gazing and playing at cards. There is no Sabbath here. The Col. has gone ashore to see when we shall land and where!"<sup>3</sup>

It was a long, slow task to get a regiment on board a vessel for a move. Men were detailed to load baggage and horses. "We had twenty-five loads of camp equipage, drawn by 4 horses, or mules each."<sup>4</sup>

"We embarked at 4 o'clock yesterday (if I may now call it the 6th)<sup>5</sup> or as soon thereafter as some tons of baggage and a thousand men could be moved from the Island<sup>6</sup> in barges and lighters to the steamer on which we are now. We, that is, the last of us, got on board about 9½ P. M. but the baggage is but unloaded and the horses are yet to come. We expect to get under way at 8 o'clock this (Friday) morning and shall be on the water some 7 to 10 days. Our destination is surely Fort Pickens to reenforce that beleaguered place. We might have been much better and much worse pleased. We are on a fine staunch ocean steamer, and shall have as comfortable quarters and fare as we could ever have on any transport ship."<sup>7</sup>

The trip was an uneventful one, although there was a good deal of seasickness; excellent meals were served.<sup>8</sup> A week later "We dropped anchor at a quarter before six, and were at once boarded by an officer from the U. S. Steamship Niagara here on blockading duty. . . . We have to land in small boats through the surf, and shall get wet feet at least. The Col. has gone ashore to report to Col. Brown commanding here, and we shall probably begin the work of disembarkation early tomorrow. It will be a long and tedious job, as all our heavy luggage has to go ashore in our metallic life boats."<sup>9</sup> "We began to unload our men and baggage yesterday [Saturday] about 10 o'clock.

<sup>3</sup> On board Steamer Alida, May 19, 1861.

<sup>4</sup> Baltimore, Md., July 29, 1861.

<sup>5</sup> The letter was written about 1 a. m.

<sup>6</sup> Governor's island where the Seventy-fifth had been encamped for a time.

<sup>7</sup> On board steamer Baltic, December 6, 1861. (Letter begun December 5, 1861.)

<sup>8</sup> "At two o'clock P. M. the gong sounded for our first dinner on the Baltic and we ranged ourselves, thirty strong, in the dining room. . . . We had soup, fish, roast turkey, duck and mutton, vegetables nice and plenty, pudding, pies, nuts, raisins and everything necessary to a complete dinner." On board steamer Baltic, December 6, 1861.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, December 13, 1861. (Letter begun December 6th.)

The Col. and Lt. Col. went ashore in the first boat and left me to attend to the disembarkation of men and stuff. We had three of the Baltic metallic life boats and a couple of launches from the man of war Niagara, and put 25 to 50 men into each of the boats. The Island is some two miles from us where we began to land and about three down where the camp is to be. But the whole coast is lined with surf, and the launches soon capsized and most of the boats filled with water. Several guns and some light baggage was lost and we were soon confined to our own boats which landed men and baggage very slowly. We got some 100 men and a few tents on shore by dark. . . . Since breakfast, we have been landing baggage, but have not made much of a beginning. It will be a week before we shall be settled on land.”<sup>10</sup>

Flat boats and barges had to be collected for the Teche campaign,<sup>11</sup> since there were innumerable bayous and small streams to be crossed, and the Confederate cavalry opposing the advance invariably burned the bridges to delay the march. Pontoon bridges were used for the larger streams, while the Union engineers assisted by fatigue parties detailed for the purpose from the main force became very expert in rebuilding the smaller structures which had often been only partially wrecked in the haste of retreat.

Some of the river steamers used for transporting troops were in bad condition. “We got on board the Omaha and found her the slowest boat ever run, leaving N.[ew] O.[rleans] about 4½ o’clock and reaching this place [Donaldsonville] about 7½ this morning. I had a good sleep, Col. Van [Petten] and I lying down in the cabin on our blankets. We were frightened out of a sound sleep once by a rush of steam as if the steam pipe had burst, and we ran for the open air in great alarm, only to slip back quietly to bed for fear others would laugh as we did.”<sup>12</sup> In the course of an inspection tour in 1864, while acting as inspector general of cavalry, Department of the Gulf, Colonel Babcock had a number of river steamers at his disposal for moving regiments from place to place, and in his letters he shows conditions on some of them. On board the steamer “Luminary” “I had a good stateroom and nice bed, but Oh! Mosketoes! I

<sup>10</sup> Steamer Baltic at Santa Rosa island, Florida, December 14 (i. e. 15) 1861.

<sup>11</sup> Brashear City, La., January 11, 1863.

<sup>12</sup> Donaldsonville, La., July 27, 1863.



had no *bar*. I got to sleep, however, and awoke in the night to find my hands and wrists smarting furiously, and my finger joints appearing to be swollen. This did not spoil my sleep, and in the morning I was all right."<sup>13</sup>

He had been at Baton Rouge inspecting the regiments there and was ready to return down the river. "The *Mittie Stephens* had steam up, and I got on to her, with a miscellaneous crowd of spies, smugglers, Jews, and perhaps others, and came slowly down the river. The *Mittie* is a Coast Packet, and stops at any plantation or place where a white flag is waved to take on passengers or freight. We dined in great state at 2 P. M. (for 50 cts) and before three I got off at Hermitage Plantation."<sup>14</sup>

About two weeks later he was ordered to rejoin his regiment, now attached to the Army of the Potomac, and embarked on the steamer *Arago*. "Daylight found us somewhere above the Forts [Jackson and St. Philip below New Orleans] and we only reached the bar at 2 P. M., just in time to stick on it. Here we lay, the horses suffering intensely from heat, until the telegraph could summon assistance for us from N. O. About noon on Saturday, one tug arrived and added her efforts to ours, but to no purpose. During the P. M. several tugs came down, but nothing could be done until Sunday, as the tide is at flood there at noon now. Early on Sunday, the men<sup>15</sup> were transhipped on one of the tugs and six other tugs began to haul on us. Just as we had given it up, we floated about 1 P. M. and by the time we had finished our dinner (we dine at 2 P. M.) the ship was rolling so as to disturb us a good deal. . . .

"The vessel is very dirty, the table is illy spread, and the viands are badly prepared. We do little at table but just satisfy a feeble demand of hunger and grumble.

"At our table is Gen. Grover, whom I like better, Dr. and Mrs. Hoffman who are both agreeable, cultivated people, Mrs. H[essel-tine] and Mrs. Merritt, Mr. Sayre and myself,—no others. There are no other ladies. There is little ice on board, no water except from a leaky condenser which yields salt water, there are no fruits, the ship is crowded, the men and horses are on a short allowance of water and so everything conspires to make us measurably cross and uncomfortable."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> New Orleans, La., June 30, 1864.

<sup>14</sup> New Orleans, La., July 12, 1864.

<sup>15</sup> Grover's division of the Nineteenth Army Corps was on board.

<sup>16</sup> On board Steamer *Arago*, July 30, 1864,

Baggage and supplies ordinarily followed the army on wagons drawn by four horses or mules.<sup>17</sup> There was always danger of a cavalry raid to capture the wagon train, as it was long and moved slowly. Troops of course guarded it, but the force detailed for convoy duty was usually comparatively small, and the loss to the army of its wagon train was a serious blow. Teams were often commandeered or utilized to carry troops from one place to another. "Fortified by a good breakfast, we stepped ashore at Barre's Landing at eight o'clock Wednesday morning. The troops were nearly all gone and I could hear no word of my horse or saddle. Daniel found the old white horse he had ridden and we soon got two carts, a one-mule cart in which Dr. Bacon got with negro driver, and a three-mule cart into which Wrotnowski, Lieuts. Snow and Sanborn 1st Me Bat., Dr. Benedict and I got, with our baggage. Dr. Benedict drove and won great applause by the manner in which he turned the latent strength of our three mules to account. Starting a little after nine, we reached Washington about noon, inquiring everywhere for our brigade, and no one seemed to know where it was. Just out of Washington we lunched and watered our mules. Seven miles beyond, we halted an hour and fed our mules and got a good rest. . . . Dr. Bacon amused us greatly by sending word frequently into the houses as we passed 'Give my compliments to your master and tell him Hurra for Lincoln!' He is very bitter toward the rebels. Our mules began to go tired, but we pushed ahead as fast as we could until by sunset we came up with Grover and General Banks's Head Quarters, six miles short of Holmesville. Here Dr. Bacon stopped. We took supper with Col. Dwight. I got a fresh pony for Daniel to ride, and Dr. Benedict found three fresh mules for our cart. I looked through Grover's Division but found nothing of horse or saddle.

"About eight o'clock we started off fresh expecting to catch the brigade by a 20 mile ride, but passing Holmesville and Gen. Emory two or three miles beyond it, we still had 20 miles to go, long long miles, I tell you. However, we accomplished it by two o'clock — and came upon Gen. Weitzel's pickets."<sup>18</sup>

Thus the transportation problem was solved, poorly at times, and with many delays, but with increasing efficiency as the war progressed, and the organization for handling it rounded into form.

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<sup>17</sup> Baltimore, Md., July 29, 1861. Alexandria, La., May 13, 1863.

<sup>18</sup> Alexandria, La., May 9, 1863.

## CHAPTER VI

### ORGANIZATION

#### TROOPS (PERSONNEL)

In the formation of volunteer regiments, all sorts and conditions of men were thrown together through the arbitrary assignment to the regiment, of companies coming from different parts of the State. The officers naturally came in closer contact with one another than did the men of a regiment, since there were only three commissioned officers to each company of a hundred men. Special drills and officers' schools brought them together constantly for a common purpose. Thus it was important that there should be the least possible friction among those who would have to cooperate in making an efficient regiment.

When Company H arrived in Albany and was assigned to the Third Regiment, Colonel Townsend took the officers to the barracks and introduced them to their fellow officers.<sup>1</sup> After the formal organization of the regiment they began to get better acquainted with each other through their barrack life. "Our officers are really a fine lot of fellows of very good habits in the main.

"I like Col. T[ownsend]. He is one of your born aristocrats but has seen service enough, and the world enough, to be an agreeable man. He made an overland trip to California several years ago, and knows what hardship is."<sup>2</sup> In spite of this glowing statement at the beginning, friction soon developed and traits of character began to show which had not appeared at first. Late in June, Colonel Townsend received an offer of a commission in one of the regiments of regulars, and went to Washington to obtain the appointment.<sup>3</sup> "We are having quite a ferment in our Regiment about field officers. Col. Townsend has at last given us official notice of his having left us permanently. The Coloneley, of course, is left vacant. The Lieutenant Col. Alford, is very obnoxious to us all, and yet we found ourselves in such a condition that we were obliged to recommend him for appointment to the Coloneley, and he has gone to Albany to get the appointment. He will come back, no doubt, Col. of

<sup>1</sup> Diary, April 28, 1861.

<sup>2</sup> Albany, N. Y., May 7, 1861.

<sup>3</sup> Camp Hamilton, Va., June 21, 1861. (Letter begun June 20th.)

the Regiment. Meantime, in default of Col., Lt. Col. and Major, we are commanded by Capt. Abel Smith Jr. of Brooklyn who is Senior Captain. We are in a muss about whom we will have for Major. We have recommended Capt. Smith for Lt. Col. and he will make us a fine officer. If Col. Alford, who is a *sot*, could be got rid of, we should feel quite well.

"Now, we all feel quite ill. Catlin [captain of Company H] wants to be Major, but can't make any show for it. Col. Alford will be gone a week, during which time, we are not likely to move from here, except for picket duty."<sup>4</sup> The demoralization of the regiment increased until there was talk of disbanding it on August 15, 1861, when its three months of service was completed, but no action for this purpose was taken. Instead, when the mutiny of August 15th occurred, General Dix as commander of the troops acted promptly, arresting the noncommissioned officers and threatening to turn the artillery on the mutineers.

"We had a serious time yesterday morning which had like to have had a tragic ending. For some weeks our men have talked of claiming their discharge on the 14th inst. their three months being up then, on the ground that the U. S. only recognizes volunteers for three months and three years, and we being enrolled for *two* years must be treated as three months troops. But there had been so much talk that it was finally a good deal laughed at, and when I went to bed on Wednesday night I had no idea of waking upon Thursday the 15th in the midst of a mutiny. But so it chanced. I awoke about 5 o'clock (the reveille was not beaten at half past four for want of drumsticks which the drummer alleged had been stolen) and having a headache and being in a profuse perspiration with occasional chills I concluded not to get up until breakfast time though I felt very well. I heard the order 'Fall in for rollcall!' to which only four of our company besides the new recruits answered. Soon Capt. Catlin came in to borrow a pistol and told me the men were refusing to fall in. Of course I got up and dressed as quick as I could, and found Capt. C. had about a dozen in line. With my assistance and the muzzle of a huge pistol which he presented to them all that yet remained in the quarters were got into line — about 20. Some companies had more, some less, some none. We moved the sick, cooks, servants and loyal ones off the ground to the left of the camp and finally around on

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, July 9, 1861. (Letter begun July 8th.)

the parade ground in front of the Fort. A field piece was brought to bear on the mutineers. Gen. Dix visited them and soon had them all in line. By this time however it was nine o'clock and we were all as hungry as bears. . . . Last night there was a very good state of feeling in camp, and I think the men were enough ashamed of their prank, and far enough satisfied with Gen. Dix's determination to have discipline so that there will be no more trouble. Gen. Dix made a short speech to them, read the articles of war applicable to the case, arrested the non-commissioned officers engaged in it and committed them for trial. No mention of it has got into the Baltimore papers yet, and I presume it will not be heard of except by means of private letters, an unusually large number of which were written and sent.

"Some of our men grumbled very much to have a loaded pistol presented at their heads, but I think the spectacle will not harm them. There are no signs of insubordination now."<sup>5</sup> "I had about as lief go to jail as undertake the command of any company in this regiment, so utterly demoralized are the men."<sup>6</sup> "There are but 12 or 15 officers out of 30 in all, now present fit for duty,—not enough to furnish all the companies with a commissioned [officer] to command on parades and drills."<sup>7</sup>

Colonel Babcock came in closer touch with the officers of the Seventy-fifth New York, however, than with those of the Third regiment, both on account of his rank and by reason of his longer term of service in it. His first impression of them was wholly favorable. "I am charmed with our officers—They improve upon acquaintance. There is not a rowdy or a snob among them and some of them are remarkably genial, agreeable men. This surgeon, Dr. Benedict of Skaneateles is a well read social, jovial man who attends conscientiously to all his duties and has the crowning virtue of Abou Ben Adhem. He is an old abolitionist who has escaped fanaticism. . . . Dr. Powers, the Assistant Surgeon is another warm-hearted genial soul who loves such books as I do, and reads a great deal. The Chaplain, Mr. Hudson of Union Springs, knows many of my friends. . . . He is a quite, conscientious man who loves his fellow men."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Fort McHenry, August 16, 1861.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, October 18, 1861.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, October 20, 1861. (Letter begun October 18th.)

<sup>8</sup> On board the steamer Baltic, December 9, 1861. (Letter begun December 6th.)

"I like our officers and regiment better and better. There are nine captains and all high minded men, some of them remarkably fine specimens of manhood. I like best Capt. Dwight, County Judge of Cayuga Co., Capt. McDougall a young Scotchman, a banker in Auburn, and Capt. Porter a Methodist clergyman.<sup>9</sup> The Chaplain pleases me much, and the surgeon and assistant surgeon are men whom it is worth while to know. Col. Dodge is a strange, taciturn man, possibly a little jealous in his disposition, but a man of integrity, energy and pride of character. The Lieut. Col. Merritt, is a fellow of considerable force and fair character."<sup>10</sup>

As the regiment approached its destination of Santa Rosa island, Florida, the officers began to speculate on the character and personality of the officers with whom they would come in contact there, from the regulars, and from the Sixth regiment of New York Volunteers. "Col. Wilson's officers are said to be a fine gentlemanly set of men, and regard us in the same favorable light, so we shall get on well together."<sup>11</sup> The two regiments did not have any difficulties with each other, for each was a unit in itself, and they were not put under brigade regulations for several months. The officers and men of the Sixth regiment, however, were continually getting into trouble, and courts-martial were held very often for the trial of offenders. Major Newby of that organization showed his character in a shooting affray which occurred on March 2, 1862. "He has figured, so report says, as a professional gambler in California, as an officer in Nienraugua under Walker, and as a lawyer at home. He is now a very good looking fellow with white skin, black hair and a waxed moustache *a la Napoleon*."<sup>12</sup>

Friction developed in the Seventy-fifth, also, partly as a result of promises which had been made to another officer of securing the position of major in the regiment, and partly on account of the character of Colonel Dodge. "I learn from Capt. MacDougall . . . who is the Captain of 'A' company, a banker, a

<sup>9</sup> Charles C. Dwight, captain of Company D; Clinton D. MacDougall, captain of Company A. (Major Babcock in his letters spells this man's name "McDougall."); and Lansing Porter, captain of Company I. This information has been obtained from a printed list of the officers of the Seventy-fifth New York which had been cut out and pasted inside the cover of the diary for 1862.

<sup>10</sup> On board the steamer Baltic, December 13, 1861. (Letter begun December 6th.)

<sup>11</sup> Steamer Baltic at Santa Rosa island, Florida, December 14 [15], 1861.

<sup>12</sup> Santa Rosa island, Florida, March 3, 1862.

smart business man, a man who has 'traveled,' a gentleman and a fine officer, that he was promised the position of Major in the Regiment by Col. Dodge fairly and squarely. . . . He seems to like me and I am sure I *take to him*. He is a frank, manly fellow who loves and hates as strongly as one can."<sup>13</sup> The feeling against Colonel Dodge gradually increased as shown by passages in successive letters, as little incidents occurred.<sup>14</sup>

"I am not so much annoyed at what affects me, after all, as I am by his infernal native meanness. His one great ruling characteristic is selfishness. Nothing is too good for him in the way of eating, drinking, bodily comforts, and he would be forever unhappy if any neighbor had a thing which he had not. At table he is so mean that he will not, unless asked, pass a dish or help a neighbor to the least thing. And he never disguises his passion, for he has no idea how it looks or what it is. He talks very little — proof of wisdom — doubly strong in him, for he knows comparatively little. . . . I have come to disrespect him very thoroughly."<sup>15</sup> Colonel Dodge was found hiding behind one of the tents listening to private conversation among a group of officers one evening, and this act did a great deal to crystallize the feeling against him. He finally resigned in July 1862,<sup>16</sup> and the tension decreased from that time.

The regiment was formed into a brigade with the Sixth regiment in March, and placed under the command of Brigadier General Arnold, who had succeeded Colonel Brown as commandant at Fort Pickens. "General Arnold seems to be a humane officer and a judicious commander. He affords us all possible facilities for shelter and rest and looks after health and comfort as well as military discipline. Our summer, so far, at least, as officers are concerned, will be very comfortable."<sup>17</sup> This officer was a very active man, and chafed at the delay in attacking Pensacola on account of the lack of boats to carry his troops to the mainland. Rumors were rife on the island that expeditions were to be sent out a number of times, and he urged General Butler at Ship island to send him boats for the attack, but the attempt was never made. He organized his men into an

<sup>13</sup> Santa Rosa island, Florida, January 3, 1861 (i. e. 1862).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, December 25, 1861. (Letter begun December 20th.)

*Ibid.*, December 28, 1861. (Letter begun December 26th.)

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, February 1, 1862. (Letter began January 31st.)

<sup>16</sup> Hall, "A Record of the 75th N. Y. Volunteers." In *Cayuga in the Field*, part 2, p. 53.

<sup>17</sup> Santa Rosa island, Florida, May 2, 1862. (Letter begun May 1st.)

efficient force, and trained them in all forms of offensive operations.<sup>18</sup>

On December 16, 1862, Major General Banks took command of the Department of the Gulf,<sup>19</sup> succeeding General Butler, and shortly afterwards the army moved up the Teche. There is a good deal of difference of opinion as to the success of this campaign, and its object, but the letters take the view that it was a failure. "Gen. Banks is very unpopular, at least he seems so. In our Brigade, he is voted ineligible to the presidency, and couldn't get a score of votes. I don't go much on him myself."<sup>20</sup> "He tries to be popular with the soldiers, but has not their confidence. Gen. Weitzel is the pet of the troops."<sup>21</sup> "I was very glad to have Col. Dwight join us, for there will be at least one sensible man on Gen. Banks's staff. His staff officers seem to be very unpopular everywhere, supercilious as the Devil. Major Carpenter, however, must now be excepted, as he is Chief Quarter Master of the Expedition and so is on the staff of the Commanding General."<sup>22</sup>

General Banks conducted several campaigns with more or less success during the year of 1863, and the early part of 1864, but his control over affairs lessened gradually.<sup>23</sup> In March 1864, came the Red river campaign and the disastrous retreat. This expedition completed his failure as a general in command of a department, although he was not superseded until late in 1864. Colonel Dwight was sent to the mouth of Red river to meet Confederate commissioners and arrange for an exchange of prisoners, in August 1864, and the officer from Mobile asked him "'But what has become of General Banks, has he any command nowadays?' 'Oh Yes. He commands the department of the Gulf.' I did not say 'in a horn' nor 'super sinistram'."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> W. Babcock to "Friend Harry" Wells (?) of the *Owego Times* (?). Santa Rosa island, Florida, March 13, 1862.

<sup>19</sup> Diary, December 16, 1862.

<sup>20</sup> Franklin, La., April 16, 1863. (Letter begun April 14th.)

<sup>21</sup> Near Opelousas, La., April 22, 1863.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, April 24, 1863.

"Affairs [at Port Hudson] are badly managed. The most intimate and influential friends of Banks are mere adventurers, not in the service of the Government except as Gen. Banks employs them. The officers by whom he seems to set most store have not the confidence of those who know them best. Banks himself is very unpopular with all except Massachusetts troops, and I do not think he has the confidence of anybody." Port Hudson, La., July 4, 1863.

<sup>23</sup> New Orleans, La., June 30, 1864.

<sup>24</sup> Colonel Dwight to Colonel Babcock, New Orleans, La., August 24, 1864.





GENERAL BANKS



Some time previously, Colonel Babcock wrote "The gossip is that Dana is to command the Department of the Gulf soon — Can this be true? Banks is gone up, surely, and cannot remain many weeks if signs do not fail.

"By the bye, has the last epigram on Banks reached the mouth of White River? It is believed here to be as well put as many which have seen print.

"'Tis said that Banks has grown profane,  
For once he dammed Red River;  
But in return, that vengeful stream  
Has damned poor Banks forever!"<sup>25</sup>

Perhaps it may be fitting to conclude this part of the study dealing with the officers with whom Colonel Babcock came in contact, by giving six "traits" or character sketches which were jotted down in the front of the diary for 1862. The first of these describes Robert C. Perry of Tarrytown, N. Y.

"A slight little fellow, nice, and even finical in dress, *au fait* in the usages of polite society, thoroughly read in everything merely literary, with refined taste in literary criticism, in ladies' dresses and in the modes of the tailor.

"He is modest, careful of the feelings of others, full of humor and good humor, and has a memory which enables him to tell a story or two apropos to any subject of conversation. He don't like the common people, and loves literature for its own sake rather than for its humanizing influences on the ruder classes. He has too much regard for the feelings of others to be a reformer, but a more genial companion could hardly be. He is 30 years old, 5 feet        inches high, has black hair and eyes, speaks quick and stammers a little. He is Military Sec'y at Hd. Qrs. and is 5th Sergt. in Co. 'I'."

The subject of the second is Dr Benedict of Skaneateles, N. Y.

"Dr. B. is a large, rather corpulent fleshy man whose prevailing style of thought is severe. He is one of the surly Anti-slavery and Temperance reformers, and, though not at all in keeping with his habits of thought, this has made him a skeptic in religious matters. He appreciates humor, likes a joke at the expense of others, but not at his own, and never hesitates to speak his mind on account of the feelings of his hearers. He

<sup>25</sup> Colonel Babcock to General [Lee (?)]. New Orleans, La., July 17, 1864.

persists in ignoring the rank of his associates, shakes hands with officers and privates alike in his daily duties as surgeon, and sends his compliments to the 'Sergeant of the Guard' as quick as to the General Commanding.

"He dresses well, practices the domestic virtues, and once turned a friend out of doors for boasting of a piece of financial slight of hand.

"He is Surgeon of the 75th N. Y. Vols."

"Dr. P.[owers] is a pale, mild, genial man who has read nearly everything, travelled all over this continent, collected rare books, coins, curiosities in natural history, autographs and the Lord knows what else. He smokes incessantly, likes a social glass with a friend, looks on the dark side of things, but croaks so pleasantly as to give nobody the blues, and knows a great fund of stories of himself and others which he tells with much humor and grace. Rather a reformer in his social and religious notions, he disturbs nobody in their own. He writes readable letters for the newspapers, and scientific articles for the medical journals. A kind, hospitable gentleman whose temper and deportment will not allow him an enemy, and whose talent and culture are almost wasted as Ass't Surgeon of the 75th N. Y. V."

The next sketch is of Lewis E. Carpenter, of Auburn, N. Y., quartermaster of the regiment, and one of Colonel Babcock's best friends during the war.

"A rough, ungraceful body a little under medium height, light hair and sandy beard, a full face broken into by the loss of an arch in the bridge of his nose, pertain to my friend L. E. C.

"He is thoroughly acquainted with the literature and practices of the sporting world, has visited London, Paris and San Francisco, but has never shed his awkward manners. Yet he is a true gentleman and an honest man, and kindness warms his face and polishes his ways.

"Modest even to bashfulness, any encroachment on his rights, or an act of meanness or oppression brings a self-asserting jerk to his head which must not be trifled with. He will not be outdone if he can help it, but is shrewd and cautious, and rarely commits himself rashly to anything. Friendly to reforms, he is too timid to be a reformer, but shines as a genial comrade and a faithful man."

Colonel Dodge is described as "A smallish man, below medium

size, taciturn, cunning, jealous, selfish and ill-bred. He has a heart open by nature to kindly impulses, but he has been buffeted about so much by men, and so broken by disease, that what was meant for an easy nature has become fitful, morose and hard. When pleasant, he is very complaisant, but when out of humor he will treat friends and strangers alike with great rudeness, and when asked the commonest questions of business or civility will stand stock still or blurt out a rude reply. His weak side is reached by flattery, and he has great pride of appearance and opinion. His Regt. gives him immense importance and he would not forego the command of it for anything. His most sensitive point is the fear that some of his officers will get more influence than himself. He would keep up a car window for his own comfort if his consumptive neighbor was killed by it."

Brigadier General Lewis G. Arnold, of Boston, commanding the Department of Florida, is the subject of the last of these sketches.

"Bred a soldier and having served his country in all sorts of warfare he is fitted by experience for holding an important office. He is small and seems a little bent out of shape but has quite a martial air on his horse, which he sits very well. His head is round, his face mild and pleasant and the glance of his round black eyes very genial. He has a habit of saying very good things and of indicating his own appreciation of them by cocking his eye at his listener.

"He is brave, prudent, ambitious, active and cautious at once. He is a good disciplinarian, without being severe, and strives, by a law of his nature, to conciliate and please all of his officers. The result is that he is very popular with all, and his influence and administration could hardly be bettered."

Efficient officers make efficient troops, and in general the men volunteering for service in the ranks of the Union armies were of such caliber as to make good soldiers with proper training. The country was deeply in earnest, and meant to support those in charge of operations to the end. There was a wild furor of enthusiasm at the outset, which gradually wore off, but settled into a determination to crush the rebellion at any cost. All classes of men came forward in response to the various proclamations calling for troops. "As the men of the city companies filed in to eat, with short hair, dirty clothes, and stolid, brutal

faces, I felt sad to think that our men should associate together at all with them. . . . Our regiment is to be separated as soon as may be. Our company is universally pronounced to be one of the best companies yet seen in Albany. The Col. flatters us very much, and I think his designs are such as to make it for his interest to deal well by us.”<sup>26</sup> “The Troy regiment, who are a set of thieves and marauders, broke open the church [near which the force supporting a reconnoitering party was stationed] injured the organ most wantonly, outraged the church and scattered the books all about.”<sup>27</sup>

The New York regiments were weak in numbers, and sickness and hard work soon reduced their membership.<sup>28</sup> “They [*the men*] shirk a good deal from the daily duty of camp. This morning I was quite discouraged at the shrinking manifested, and went to the Col. He came down to the quarters, and routed them out suddenly so that we got a good turnout.”<sup>29</sup> “We have attempted to make arrangements to recruit our company and at least fill up the places of those who have gone home. We need 15 or 20 good plucky men to make our company strong enough to hold its own. We are getting quite well enough sifted out now so that we could, with 15 more *good men*, get on easily. Weak companies have more work, for each man, to do than strong ones.”<sup>30</sup>

When the Third regiment moved to Fort McHenry it was brought in contact with the Eighth Massachusetts. “They were the brave boys who first came with Gen. Butler to Annapolis and built the R. R. to Washington. In their ranks is Homans, the engineer who found and recognized his own handiwork in the mud of Maryland and rebuilt and restored it to usefulness. Day and night almost without food, the brave fellows worked and marched for ten days. Of all this they had a thousand proud stories to tell, and they had so many questions to ask about the Bethel fight.”<sup>31</sup> “They were the most brightly intelligent looking soldiers I ever saw, and I especially admired their handsome manly officers, as I saw them at Dress Parade last night.”<sup>32</sup> This regiment, however, was only a three months regiment, and went home July 30th, when its time was up.

<sup>26</sup> Albany, N. Y., April 28, 1861.

<sup>27</sup> Hampton, Va., June 20, 1861.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, June 19, 1861. (Letter begun June 18th.)

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, June 21, 1861. (Letter begun June 20th.)

<sup>30</sup> Camp Hamilton, Va., July 18, 1861.

<sup>31</sup> Baltimore, Md., July 29, 1861.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

As the war dragged on enlistments came to be made for 3 years, and the character of the regiments coming to the front seems to have changed for the better. The Seventy-fifth may perhaps be taken as a type of these. The men and officers who volunteered for this regiment came with a sense of the reality of the war and a knowledge of its hardships and dangers. "We have a superb regiment,—a fine body of faithful, patriotic men and officers who need little urging to do their duty well. If the Col. were a good disciplinarian and a decent man, we should have the best spirit possible."<sup>33</sup> This high standard was maintained all through the war, and although its losses were heavy, it was still a crack regiment. In the course of the campaign in Virginia Colonel Babcock wrote, "The officers here are all doing first rate now, are faithful and willing and brave. I would rather have the 300 muskets we carry in battle than 450 of any other troops I know, in spite of the grumbling of our men at times."<sup>34</sup>

The Sixth regiment of New York Volunteers, however, composed of men from New York City, apparently was of a very low standard of morality, although it fought well in battle. "It is a fine Reg't, but though it has been in the service over a year, it is, I think, inferior to ours in spirit and discipline."<sup>35</sup> "Col. Wilson's men are a poor set of sticks, many of them criminals and many of them drunkards. Only a few are worth knowing or remembering. One of them, a private, was caught about 4 this morning in a tent near which he was posted as a sentinel, apparently trying to find a watch there to steal."<sup>36</sup> The members of this regiment were a constant source of trouble to the provost marshal of Pensacola, also, since liquor came into the port by the ships arriving, and all sorts of riots and assaults took place. "Yesterday Col. Billy Wilson went to Oakfields on a scout, and his officers and men plundered an old man, a union man, too, of over \$400 worth of watches, money, plate, liquor & etc. which we have been trying today to restore. It has been a great mortification to us, and the General has been terribly angry about it. He gave Col. Wilson a tremendous rating this morning, and ordered him to restore everything or pay for it, and punish the offenders. We shall find most of the goods. They

<sup>33</sup> Santa Rosa island, Florida, April 30, 1862. (Letter begun April 25th.)

<sup>34</sup> Near Berryville, Va., September 9, 1864.

<sup>35</sup> Santa Rosa island, Florida, April 30, 1862. (Letter begun April 25th.)

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, March 2, 1862.

are a precious set of thieves.”<sup>37</sup> “Oh but Billy Wilson’s men are the very flower of the Dead Rabbits, the *creme de la creme* of Bowery society. I only want a decent excuse to shoot one or two. I have one in irons, and him and one other in the City Jail tonight in a nice snug room.”<sup>38</sup>

When the Seventy-fifth arrived in New Orleans on September 3, 1862, General Butler was busily organizing the troops under his command and raising new forces. “He has a negro regiment nearly full, officered by negro captains and lieutenants, under the command of Col. Stafford. They are said to be fine looking men, and as Gen. Butler wittily wrote to the Secretary of War, ‘will not average a deeper color than the late Mr. Webster.’ He has one fine regiment of Louisiana troops, 1st La. Vols. and there are about 300 recruits for the 2nd La. Regt. now in this depot. Indeed as I sit on my balcony to write these words, I am almost deafened by the shoutings of the drill sergeants who are teaching some dozen or more of squads and companies the elements of tactics.”<sup>39</sup> These black troops showed their mettle before Port Hudson, in 1863. “The negro troops, it is said, really won some fine laurels a few nights ago. Between them and the rebels lay three ravines occupied by the rebel pickets, which the negroes determined to possess. The rebels rallied in force and met them, in desperate fight. The sick and convalescent of the negroes, even on crutches they say, turned out and pitched in and fought like the best soldiers, finally driving in the rebels over two-thirds of the distance and holding the ground gained. Everybody (. . .) speaks in the highest terms of them now, and soon there will be but one opinion of the black soldiers.”<sup>40</sup>

Such was the personnel of the regiments with which Colonel Babcock came in contact, in his four years of army life, and although he may have been a harsh judge of character in certain cases, he was in a position to value conduct with a fair degree of accuracy.

<sup>37</sup> Pensacola, Fla., July 28, 1862. (Letter begun July 23d.)

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, August 5, 1862. (Letter begun August 3d.)

<sup>39</sup> Steamer Ocean Grove, and New Orleans, La., September 4, 1862. (Letter begun September 2d.)

<sup>40</sup> Port Hudson, La., July 1, 1863.



## EQUIPMENT

Very little is said in the letters, concerning the equipment which was furnished to the men, either clothing or arms. "This morning we distributed shirts, drawers, and caps to them, and with the bracing air and beautiful sunshine, they are as happy as can be."<sup>41</sup> Uniforms likewise were issued, but many of them were of poor quality and did not last any length of time with hard usage. About the middle of July Lieutenant Babcock writes, "Colonel Alford returned last night from Albany with promises that our Regt. shall have new uniforms throughout, shoes, stockings, shirts, and overclothes. With these we shall be quite proud and comfortable."<sup>42</sup> "About the clothing [while at Camp Hamilton] it was all true. Partly it was the fault of the soldiers themselves, and no man need have been naked. But soldiers are children, and when their garments gave out, they would curse the maker and give them an extra rip instead of a mending. The result was that they lost *care* and pride, and the Troy Regt. 2nd, Col. Carr, was in a very bad fix. Many men had no pants and did duty in drawers and barefooted. Many had only a dirty Havelock to wear on their heads. Our Regt. having a neater colored uniform (dark blue jacket and light blue pants) had more pride and took better care of their clothes. Still some of ours were barefooted and even some had no pants."<sup>43</sup>

The officers evidently had to furnish their own equipment. "I bought my soldiers cap and ordered a pair of soldier pants. My dress will consist when complete of a frock coat, blue, with gilt buttons, close and straight in front. My pants will also be of dark blue, full and long, with a green welt on the outside of each leg. The military overcoat is a sort of coat with a cape of blue with gilt buttons. . . . I have no sword yet. Do not know when or where it is to be had!"<sup>44</sup>

"I got back to camp about 1 P. M. and found the boys with blankets strapped, knapsacks, haversacks, canteens, etc., all on, being inspected! Soon after this the Rifles came and I have been hard at work ever since preparing and distributing the

<sup>41</sup> Albany Barracks, N. Y., May 5, 1861.

<sup>42</sup> Camp Hamilton, Va., July 18, 1861.

It is rather interesting to note that these new uniforms came from the State of New York, and not the United States.

<sup>43</sup> Baltimore, Md., July 30, 1861. (Letter begun July 29th.)

<sup>44</sup> Albany Barracks, N. Y., May 8, 1861.

New Orleans, La., September 13, 1862.

guns. They are the Enfield rifle, a very effective and handsome weapon and the boys are delighted with them.”<sup>45</sup> The Seventy-fifth received a better gun than the other, in August 1862. “Our regiment received new arms and accoutrements throughout, yesterday. They now have a rifled musket which is equal to any in the world, and I trust will make a good use of them.”<sup>46</sup> These rifles, however, were muzzle-loaders and required some little time to load and fire, as, according to the drill manual, there were nine distinct operations in charging the piece, and three more in discharging it. The cartridge had to be torn off with the teeth, the powder poured into the barrel of the gun, the ball inserted and the charge rammed home. Finally a cap was placed on the primer beneath the hammer, and the piece was ready for firing.<sup>47</sup>

This slow process of loading and firing explains in some degree the preparations which the Confederates had made to receive the final assault at Port Hudson. “They generally agreed that our next assault must succeed. Their artillery was mostly knocked up by our superior shooting, but we captured a good deal of artillery and immense quantities of ammunition. Their soldiers on the breastworks, in anticipation of another assault, were furnished with three guns each, one rifled musket, to fire until we should get very close, and two smooth-bore muskets or shot-guns heavily loaded with buckshot. You can perhaps imagine, but I cannot describe the slaughter which good soldiers would make with such an armament.”<sup>48</sup>

#### EXPENSES

A very interesting list of prices of various articles of equipment is given on the last pages of the diary for 1862. It seems worth while to present this in full.

Uniform Hat, complete.....	\$1.88
Forage cap .....	.63
Coat, (musicians) .....	7.09
“ Private’s .....	6.71
Jackets .....	

<sup>45</sup> New York City, June 2, 1861. (Letter begun May 30th.)

<sup>46</sup> Pensacola, Fla., August 3, 1862.

<sup>47</sup> Brevet Lieutenant Colonel W. J. Hardee, *Rifle and Light Infantry Tactics*, I:33 et seq. (Philadelphia, 1855, Lippincott, Grambo & Co.)

<sup>48</sup> Donaldsonville, La., July 18, 1863.

Trousers, Sergeants .....	\$3.28
"    Corp. ....	2.15
"    Privates .....	3.05
Sash .....	2.63
Flannel sack .....	2.15
"    "    lined .....	2.63
Flannel Shirts .....	.88
Drawers .....	1.94
Stockings per Pr. ....	.26
Great-coats .....	7.20
Blankets .....	2.95
Knapsacks & Straps .....	2.57
Haversacks .....	.48
Canteens .....	.34
"    straps .....	.14
Knit wool jackets, used for sacks.....	2.50
Bed sacks, single.....	1.06
"    "    double .....	1.13
Axe, helve & sling.....66, 12, 61	1.49
Hatchet, helve & sling.....27, 03, 35	.65
Spade 56, Pick axe & helve 61.....	1.25
Camp Kettle .....	.48
Mess Pan .....	.17
Iron Pot .....	1.14
Garrison flag .....	40.25
Storm " .....	15.75
Recruiting " .....	5.67
Guidon .....	9.25
Camp color .....	2.28
National Color, Arty & Inf.....	50.00
Regimental " " " .....	69.17
Wall Tent, etc.....	32.17
Sibley Tent, etc.....	48.61
"    "    stove .....	3.88
Hospital tent .....	80.00
"    "    complete .....	111.70
Servants tent .....	11.77

“List of Prices of Clothing furnished by the State of New York in 1861. 1862.”

Infantry overcoat .....	\$18.63
“ jacket .....	5.43
“ trousers .....	3.50
“ fatigue cap .....	.85
“ Pr. Shoes, pegged.....	1.20
“ “ “ sewed .....	1.98
“ “ drawers .....	.57
“ “ socks .....	.24
“ “ shirt .....	.88
“ “ blanket .....	1.95
	<hr/>
	\$26.23

The officer's uniform and equipment was a heavy expense to a man going into the service. “I went down town on Friday and ordered my uniform, my coat to be done by Wednesday, and pants as soon as style is determined. My coat with trimmings will cost me \$32.00 and whole rig to go out of the state over \$100.00 — at least a month's pay.”<sup>49</sup> “My military outfit startles me, it costs so much. Coat, vest, pants, and overcoat cost \$70.00. Sword, belt, sash, and epaulets about \$50.00 more.”<sup>50</sup> Promotion entailed new expenses in the purchase of another sword, new shoulder straps and bugle.<sup>51</sup> As a field officer, Major Babcock likewise had to buy a heavy pistol and a horse at large expense to himself. Fortunately for the purses of the officers, the cost of living on Santa Rosa island was moderate except for mess charges, as there was not much necessity for wearing full uniform, and the men could save on clothing expenses. “Our clothing here will cost less than near Washington, as we wear for fatigue purposes, articles of privates uniform clothing. I am wearing a comfortable pair of trousers, cost \$3.03. When my flannel sack is worn out, I can get a blue blouse

<sup>49</sup> Albany Barracks, N. Y., May 5, 1861.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, May 10, 1861.

<sup>51</sup> New York City, December 3, 1861.

such as the regulars wear, for about \$2 or \$3. Forage caps \$0.50 —. There being few flatirons here, and less good laundresses, starched linen is 'nowhere'. Paper collars or flannel shirt with collar turned down over the vest." <sup>52</sup> Such were the usual expenses of an officer.

## PAY

"You ask what my wages are [as first lieutenant]. I do not know yet. I drew for twenty days about \$72, out of which was to be deducted board and washing to get at my net wages. If one knows how to draw it, my wages, (out of which I must *find* [that is, board] *myself*) would amount to from \$108 to \$112. I shall be able to draw now about at the rate of \$102 per month for a month and 18 days to July 1st."

"We shall receive no more pay until in September." <sup>53</sup> A week later comes the remark, "I am quite out of money now. Two cents comprise my 'pile'. . . . I see that we are to be obliged to await Congressional action before we can be paid. This will delay us nearly to the last of July, I fear. You would laugh, and want to cry almost, to see how utterly needy are our officers and men now. I do not think \$10.00 could be borrowed in the whole camp, and many of them have drawn a month's pay ahead. I presume I am as well off as the average of them." <sup>54</sup> On July 26th, "We were called in [from picket duty] about 4 o'clock and received our pay. I received pay for one month and 18 days up to 1st July \$158.60. Our privates received \$17.60 each." <sup>55</sup> The paymaster made his next visit to the Third regiment October 8th, and paid them for July and August. For this period Lieutenant Babcock drew \$221.66. <sup>56</sup>

This delay in paying the men for their service in the army seems to have been chronic throughout the period covered by these letters, for there is always a large amount of back pay owing to the soldiers, and the payment when made is a big sum. "The officers and men on Santa Rosa have from four to six months pay due them. In three days, there will be five months pay due me, nearly or quite \$650." <sup>57</sup> The paymaster finally arrived on the island the last of February, and disputes began

<sup>52</sup> Santa Rosa island, Florida, January 23, 1862.

<sup>53</sup> Camp Hamilton, Va., July 5, 1861.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, July 11, 1861.

<sup>55</sup> Baltimore, Md., July 29, 1861.

<sup>56</sup> Fort McHenry, October 8, 1861.

<sup>57</sup> Santa Rosa, Fla., January 27, 1862. (Letter begun January 23d.)

over the amount due for service. "We have not yet received our pay. But we are to have it next Monday [March 3] — pay to the Reg't for three months and four days, and to me for the period of three months less four days. There has been some trouble and excitement in the Reg't in relation to pay. The Paymaster declined to pay the men from date of enlistment up to Nov. 26 when mustered as Reg't into the U. S. service.<sup>58</sup> The officers met night before last and resolved not to take pay unless paid in full up to Jan. 1, 1862. Gen. Arnold anxious to conciliate and please us, agreed to undertake to secure that back pay by the time a paymaster comes here again, and to have us paid now from Nov. 26 up to March 1.

"So we held another meeting last night to talk it over again and after a stormy discussion, agreed to receive what was offered us and go on."

"I had an interview with the Paymaster on Monday morning, about my back pay [for September and October 1861] and I still have to send to Washington. . . . I shall receive over \$400 here. Out of this I pay . . . my bills for forage, for our mess, for borrowed money etc., and for the Band!<sup>59</sup> This will be about \$100."<sup>60</sup> "I have never told you what pay I received, because until I was last paid, I did not know how much custom would allow me to receive. My pay proper is \$70 per month, and four rations which are by law and practice commuted in money, making \$36 per month. Then I am allowed two servants and three horses, and for each servant that I *actually keep* in service I draw \$24.50 per month, and for each horse for forage \$8.00 per month. Having but one horse, and one servant, (none now not a soldier), I did not know as I should get *pay* but for one of each. But I have found that it is the practice, though contrary to law, for officers to draw full pay and allowances, whether they keep horses or servants or not. So I did the same.

My pay then per month is.....	\$70.
Four rations at \$9 each.....	36.
Two servants at \$24.50.....	49.
Forage for three horses.....	24.
	\$179.

<sup>58</sup> The Seventy-fifth New York was enlisted during October and November 1861 under its own officers, and commenced drilling, but was not mustered into the service of the United States until November 26th.

<sup>59</sup> The officers by special collections among themselves paid the band for its services with the regiment. *Diary*, March 15, 1862.

<sup>60</sup> Santa Rosa island, Florida, February 26, 1862.

Out of this, of course was deducted the forage I draw monthly for my horse \$8.00 leaving due me per month \$171." <sup>61</sup> From this time on, very little is said with regard to the matter of pay for army service, although plainly the paymaster's arrival was expected months before he came. Rhodes in his *History of the United States* says that "A duty of three per cent was laid on . . . the salaries and pay of officers and persons in the service of the United States above an exemption of \$600." <sup>62</sup> This was the tax act of 1862, approved by the President July 1st, but no mention is made of such a tax in the letters dealing with the question.

#### DISCIPLINE

During the period of training in Albany, the officers had great difficulty in keeping order and discipline in their commands. "Tonight we got up from supper and ran out to quell a supposed row. You can hardly realize in what sort of a constant turmoil we live here now. There are some 1800 men in all sorts of command[s], in all stages of civilization, and in all states of content. Hardly a meal passes when there is not some sort of a muss at the tables. Dishes are overturned, victuals thrown, men refuse to eat, disobey orders, are arrested and sent off to the guard house, and all sorts of things done. We live in constant expectation of a general fight. Companies are stirred up by unprincipled and insubordinate fellows and urged to leave, to desert, to break the guard lines, and various wrongs. These harangues, emphasized by annoyances and hardships of the men are all the time ready to break out into disorder, and there has not been a day since I have been here at the Barracks when we have not as officers taken our pistols and gone out at some alarm to quell a riot. Fortunately they have always been exaggerated, and we have not had any real duty of that sort. Last night as we turned in at our quarters, the Adjutant General came up and quietly cautioned us to sleep with arms so that we could at once turn out and hurry to the fray. It is a life of exhilaration but not of fear. . . .

"Last night a soldier attempted to run the guard and desert. He started on a run and leaped a fence when his Lieut. who had a few moments before borrowed Catlin's pistol, commanded

<sup>61</sup> Santa Rosa island, Florida, March 11, 1862. (Letter begun March 6th.) Muster and pay rolls are extant showing this commutation of rations and forage.

<sup>62</sup> Vol. IV, p. 59.

him to stop several times. The fellow continued to run, when the Lieut. to frighten him, fired, not intending to hit him. The ball struck him in the calf of the leg, inflicting quite a serious wound. He came back and was sent to the Hospital where he is doing well.”<sup>63</sup>

Whenever a large force of soldiers is quartered in or near a city, there is always trouble for those in authority from drunkenness and vice, and such was the case during the Civil War. “Several of the boys got by the guard last night and went out and got drunk. They only got in about 10 o’clock and were drunk this morning at roll call. I got out about half past five, just as one Farnham was making some noise in the ranks. I ordered him to be quiet. He continued and I told him to go to his tent. . . . He refused in an impudent tone. I sent for the sergeant of the Guard to arrest him. Meanwhile Farnham drew his revolver and said the whole regiment couldn’t arrest him and threatened to shoot the first man who touched him. I had my sword but no pistol. The Sergt. came with two men and I directed him to arrest Farnham. The guard approached and he cocked his pistol. I was near and sprang and caught the weapon and his arm. He tried to turn it inward to shoot me but it went off into the ground and I got my hand firmly hold of the pistol and held it, he meanwhile trying to turn it toward me. I kept the muzzle up, and soon with the aid of another man, got it away and he was dragged and pushed away to the guard house. He soon got out again, but is now in irons in the Guard House. I have preferred charges and he will be tried and punished. The penalty of his offense is death or such less punishment as the court may see fit to inflict.”<sup>64</sup>

At Camp Hamilton liquor was more difficult to obtain, but whiskey was kindly sent from home, and the men had a celebration.<sup>65</sup> A pledge against liquor was signed by the officers before they left New York, but it was ineffective.<sup>66</sup> When the regiment returned to Baltimore, the reaction came and excesses of various kinds were indulged in. “The officers were nearly all off drunk, (this morning) with the women of the street. . . . Our men were nearly all gone and more were going. . . . Col. Alford was drunk.”

<sup>63</sup> Albany Barracks, New York, May 7, 1861.

<sup>64</sup> New York City, May 31, 1861. (Letter begun May 30th.)

<sup>65</sup> Camp Hamilton, Va., July 23, 1861. (Letter begun July 21st.)

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, June 15, 1861. (Letter begun June 14th.)



"Tonight not 200 [men] are in camp. Capt. Catlin, Capt. Hulburt, Lt. Cooper and one or two other officers are under arrest. A hundred men are drunk, a hundred more are at houses of ill-fame, and the balance are everywhere. . . . Col. Alford is very drunk all the time now. We shall not endure him much longer. He will be broken of his office I think, soon or resign."

"For an officer to be put under arrest involves simply a confinement to the Camp. He is not to go out of Camp, or wear his sword, or visit his superior officers, or make communication to them except in writing. Of course he does no duty."<sup>67</sup> "Practices obtain here, and they are much the same in all camps I presume, which you would think a shame to a civilized people and only worthy of a savage or semi-savage period. . . . The spectator, the sufferer, and the minister of punishment alike, accept it as 'a part of the play'. Men can be seen here, in the stocks daily, wearing and working with ball and chain, 'bucked and gagged' and even knocked down by the fist or club of the Provost Marshall. These are but the daily practices of prisons and penitentiaries, where abandoned men must be controlled, and have come into use in the 3rd regiment through the utter demoralization of the regiment, and the appointment of an old police officer to the office of Provost Marshall."<sup>68</sup>

Liquor came ashore on Santa Rosa island from the vessels<sup>69</sup> which brought supplies, and it could likewise be purchased at low cost from the quartermaster. Major Newby of the Sixth regiment one afternoon visited several of the vessels off the coast, got drunk and came back with the desire of getting in a fight. After a quarrel with a sentry he was sent to his quarters, from which he fired a pistol into Colonel Wilson's tent, fortunately without injuring anyone. "Col. Wilson ordered him under arrest, and soon Gen. Arnold's aid came up and posted a file of men around the unfortunate Major's tent. This morning he was to be put in close confinement at the Fort, and he may finish his career with 'Twelve Paces and a fusilade'. He will at least lose his commission."<sup>70</sup> A court-martial was convened and he was sentenced to dismissal.<sup>71</sup> "We had another magnificent 'drunk' last night. The Lt. Col. and Adjutant, with Perry,

<sup>67</sup> Baltimore, Md., July 29, 1861.

<sup>68</sup> Fort McHenry, October 24, 1861.

<sup>69</sup> Santa Rosa island, Florida, December 20, 1861.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, March 2, 1862.

<sup>71</sup> *Diary*, March 8, 1862.

(whom you must not take to be a soaker, for he has no gross vices,) went down to the Fort, where they had a gay oyster supper and sundry drinks, which produced songs and speeches and various exercises. The Adjutant and Lt. Col. got brutally drunk and the Adjutant about 2 o'clock invited the crowd up to our Hd. Qrs. to 'take a drink'. They all started, but Perry was entirely sober, and with the help of one or two sober regulars, succeeded in turning them back."<sup>72</sup> These parties occurred quite often on the island, and the same congenial group was usually present.

To Major Babcock as provost marshal and military governor of Pensacola fell the duty of keeping law and order in the city. "My duties include granting and refusing passes to fish, to leave town, to live in town, permits to land groceries or liquors, etc., investigations after spies, disorderly and dangerous persons, examination of property of rebels and taking it for government use, including storehouses, bakeries, houses, hospitals, furniture, rooms, lumber, etc. I have been all over the city and inside half the houses. . . . I go everywhere unarmed and without opposition by the virtue of the little words 'Provost Marshal,' but of course I try to be civil to everybody. My duties detach me from the Regt. . . . In addition to what I mentioned, I have to arrest all soldiers out without a pass, search houses suspected of selling liquors, superintend a night patrol, and generally, aid the city authorities."<sup>73</sup> "You can hardly realize what a state of society there is here. I suppose there is not a chaste black woman, or mulatto, or quadroon, or octaroon, or even a poor but decent looking white woman in the city. With all the raving passions of these soldiers, brutal enough for anything, there has not yet been a complaint of a rape. . . . If you should come into Pensacola on a Sunday, or at parades, you would be struck with the gay costumes of the black belles, but the new dresses, \$15, \$20, \$30, have all been bought with the money of soldiers, and the dresses were brought here by the army sutlers."<sup>74</sup>

Long service seems to have dulled the edge of the discipline for which the Seventy-fifth had been noted, and a good deal of work was necessary by the latter part of 1864 to restore the regi-

<sup>72</sup> Santa Rosa island, Florida, March 16, 1862. (Letter begun March 13th.)

<sup>73</sup> Pensacola, Fla., May 20, 1862.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, July 7, 1862.

ment to its former standard of training. "When we left Washington our men seemed to have forgotten all discipline. They ran out of the ranks everywhere to get water, or fruit, or to visit a house and I was constantly vexed and tired. I began to reform it, to keep up stragglers, to admonish, scold and punish, and to require all to do their duty. The work was hard, but encouraging in results, and we now get on passably well, better, I think, than any other Regt. of our brigade."

"The troops of the 6th and 8th Corps straggle fearfully,—by squads and not by individuals. In one case, it is said, that a whole regiment dropped out of the column and halted for the night, swearing that they wouldn't march any farther."<sup>75</sup>

These were the troops, then, that Colonel Babcock came in contact with, carrying their heavy equipment on long marches, for small pay, spurred on by patriotism and loyalty to the cause they served, worn out and half mutinous at times but presenting formidable bodies of well trained men in a battle.

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<sup>75</sup> Near Charlestown, Va., August 20, 1864.

## CHAPTER VII

### RECREATION AND MAIL

#### RECREATION

Although the routine of camp was severe and the hours for drill and work were long and tedious, there was some time left for recreation, and the men made the most of it, with the scanty means at their disposal. "As I look out of our window to the West. . . I see on the green sward, a hundred men laughing, talking, playing ball, cards and leap-frog, drilling and doing a hundred things for this or that purpose of pleasure or profit."<sup>1</sup> In the evening, the regimental bands played on the parade grounds for an hour or so in fine weather, making the men at the front think of their friends at home.<sup>2</sup>

In a letter dated July 4, 1861, Lieutenant Babcock tells of the celebration of the Fourth of July, in Camp Hamilton, Virginia. "There was a good deal of frolic last night in camp, and this morning we were awakened at sunrise by the firing of the national salute of 34 guns, which was answered by a salute from a rebel battery opposite consisting of eleven guns for the eleven Confederate states. . . . Our boys in nearly all of the companies, raised the 'red, white, and blue' over their quarters this forenoon, and have been indulging more or less freely in ale and whiskey and feel remarkably well. In one street they are singing the 'Star Spangled Banner', in another a sentimental song, in some they are telling stories, and others,—two or three at least,—I hear something that reminds me that they are thinking of home. . . . We lounged about all the forenoon and most of the afternoon!"<sup>3</sup>

When accidents occurred, the men accepted them in good humor, as the spice of life. "We have just had a tremendous shower and the Camp is well flooded. . . . In one of our streets the boys were flooded out and after the shower were out naked in the rain water spattering each other. There was a deal of gay laughter in the camp."<sup>4</sup> When the Third regiment arrived on its new camp grounds at Baltimore, the troops already

<sup>1</sup> Albany Barracks, N. Y., May 5, 1861.

<sup>2</sup> Camp Hamilton, Virginia, June 18, 1861. *Ibid.*, June 20, 1861.

<sup>3</sup> Camp Hamilton, Virginia, July 4, 1861.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, July 20, 1861.

there did their best to make it pleasant for them. "The camp of the 8th Mass. Regt. was near us, and their boys came flocking into our camp with pork, beans, cakes, bread and liquor of all sorts for our weary fellows, and in a moment they were all brothers." On their departure, their term of service as soldiers being up July 30, 1861,<sup>5</sup> "They exchanged many tokens with us. Homans, the immortal engineer, gave one of our boys an elegant gutta percha canteen for an old tin one which had been at Bethel. Some exchanged buttons, and you will see our boys with one Mass. State button on their jackets, while *their* jackets have one Excelsior button. Some swapped caps. They gave us kittles, [*i. e.* kettles] knives and forks, spoons, dishes and all sorts of such things."<sup>6</sup>

On Santa Rosa island there was apparently more time for recreation, since fewer hours were devoted to drill.<sup>7</sup> There was a dearth of books and reading matter, and the men devoured such as could be obtained.<sup>8</sup> The officers often went off for horse-back rides down the island, singly or in groups.<sup>9</sup> "I was busy during the forenoon, and after dinner, the Col., Quarter Master and myself set off for a ride down the island. We went down some five or six miles on the beach and back again. It is a terribly dreary place. Down two or three miles, a few pine trees afford a little shade and make it resemble some pine barrens at home; but beyond that, as far as eye can reach, it is a mere ridge of white sand, covered with a little wild grass and some low bushes."<sup>10</sup>

"I am going off on a sort of picnic party or 'Scout' tomorrow down the Island. Cpts. MacDougall of 'A', Dwight of

<sup>5</sup> *War of the Rebellion: Official Records*, series I, II: 760.

<sup>6</sup> Baltimore, Md., July 29, 1861.

<sup>7</sup> It is possible, also, that as Major Babcock was a field officer, and therefore did not have to put in so much time in actual drilling as when he was a company officer, he does not say as much about the long drill periods. Later on, however, he does speak particularly of the fact that drills are to commence in earnest, preparatory to an attack on Pensacola.

<sup>8</sup> Santa Rosa island, Florida, December 26, 1861.

<sup>9</sup> "After the Review, the Qr. Master [Carpenter] and myself took our daily ride—at least the ride we take every day when I have not worked Fred too much,—up to the Hospital, thence across to the Bay, by the Spanish Fort, thence down the hard sand around Fort Pickens and the batteries—a most delightful ride, and an interesting one too, for it takes one between the iron teeth of the rebels and our own and includes everything of interest here." Santa Rosa island, Florida, April 30, 1862. (Letter begun April 25th.)

<sup>10</sup> Santa Rosa island, Florida, January 4, 1861 [*i. e.* 1862]. (Letter begun January 3d.)

'D' and Fitch of 'F' companies are the originators of the excursion and invited me. We take fish lines, oyster rakes, provisions, liquids, and muskets, prepared for bivouac, for hunting, for fishing and for war. We go in a whaleboat and take four soldiers to row for us. We expect to start early and go down the island some 12 to 15 miles where are oyster beds, in the waters, and hunting grounds on land. We shall be gone all day. Should some Secesh scouting party surprise or overpower us, the rest of this letter will probably be dated from Montgomery jail or some such delectable quarters."<sup>11</sup> They spent the day very pleasantly, landing frequently to look for signs of the enemy and game but found neither. Sighting a Confederate schooner on the other side of the island, they formed the wild plan of attempting to capture it, but finally gave up the idea on account of the difficulty of dragging the whaleboat across the island. On their way home from this trip occurred the wild alarm of the pickets which has been narrated above.<sup>12</sup>

Cards and a congenial group helped to occupy the long evenings very pleasantly. "Last night after tea I rode up to the hospital and found the doctors of the 6th Regt. Dr. Pease and Dr. Lynch, in our doctors' tent, ready to play a game of whist. Dr. Powers<sup>13</sup> was suddenly taken quite ill and I sat down to make up the rubber. We had a very nice game and played till after nine o'clock."<sup>14</sup> "We have a custom in camp here which will amuse you. It is intended as a sort of joke on our privations here. If one accidentally mentions some luxury which, easily obtainable at home, is inaccessible here, he is instantly tried, convicted, and fined a 'muggins,' or a 'big muggins,' in proportion to the enormity of the offense. A 'muggins' is a bottle of whisky, and a 'big muggins' is a gallon jug full of the same. For instance one tantalizingly says, 'Now how would you like to drop into the Astor House for a superb dinner and a glass of iced champagne?' or 'How would you like to "drop around" this lovely moonlight night and spend the evening with "her"?' or 'How would you like a lodge in some vast widow's nest?' I was fined day before yesterday for looking down by my side as I started to rise from the table and saying in my

<sup>11</sup> Santa Rosa island, Florida, January 23, 1862.

<sup>12</sup> See section on Picket and Guard Duty, chapter 4.

<sup>13</sup> Doctor Powers was assistant surgeon of the Seventy-fifth New York.

<sup>14</sup> Santa Rosa island, Florida, February 5, 1862. (Letter begun January 31st.)

most feminine tones, 'Won't you please to get off from my frock?'<sup>15</sup>

Time hung heavy on the hands of the officers and men who were in the trenches and positions before Port Hudson during the siege. "The other day we tried hard to induce the rebs to talk to us, but after some little bantering, they seem to have been stopped by their officers. Our boys invited them to come over and get some coffee and 'hard tack', to get a good clean meal, etc., but they wouldn't say a word. On the day of the armistice they were very talkative and showed a desire to become acquainted."<sup>16</sup> As the siege continued, however, the restrictions were lessened somewhat. "Our troops on the left are very near and on very amicable terms with them. It is related that one of our night pickets crawling cautiously towards his post in front, came to a log behind which lay a Confederate picket. 'Halt!' says Confed. 'Don't come any farther, Yank! My orders are to fire on you if you come over this log!' 'All right!' says the Yankee, 'my orders are to fire on you if you come over this log.' And so the two sat down and talked amicably all night. They get down to the river together to fill canteens, and whenever ordered to fire on each other they call out 'Get down out of sight there, I'm going to fire now!' The rebs however, fire on the negroes on all occasions, and one of them called out to one of our soldiers near a working party the other day 'Hello! Yank, Get down there. I want to shoot that d—n nigger!' Our troops were under marching orders a number of days with two days' rations. The rebs called to our men and wanted to know if those 'two days' rations weren't musty?' They also inquired how Banks Volunteer Thousand Storming Party come on, and intimated the opinion that Banks didn't know how to get up an assault."<sup>17</sup>

As the men lounged around the camp fire after a long day's march, they discussed various matters of interest. "The Major and the Chaplain are near by in a neighboring tent, discussing Auburn days.<sup>18</sup> The crazy drummer boys are also within ear shot, telling marvellous and not over nice stories. Some of the men are singing psalms, some are sitting around their fires

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, April 17, 1862. (Letter begun April 16th.)

<sup>16</sup> Near Port Hudson, La., June 7, 1863.

<sup>17</sup> Port Hudson, La., July 1, 1863.

<sup>18</sup> Major Thurber and Chaplain J. E. Worth. The Seventy-fifth had been organized in Auburn, N. Y.

laughing and joking as if there were never any hard marches, or short rations."<sup>19</sup>

Amusements of these sorts helped to keep men and officers contented with their lot as soldiers by occupying the time when they might otherwise be thinking about their hardships and becoming sullen and mutinous.

#### MAIL

Letters and papers from home helped to break the monotony and lessen the hardship of the soldier's life in the field. Irregular as the mails usually were, the men eagerly waited for them, to learn news of operations in other parts of the country, and of the friends at home. At Hampton, Va., "Our mail facilities are few. You will not hear from us oftener than once a week, and will get as much news by the papers as I can write."<sup>20</sup> A carrier distributed the mails from a central point for the various companies.<sup>21</sup>

At Santa Rosa island, the delivery of the mail was a more difficult matter still, for only a comparatively small force was stationed there, and the island was away from the usual route of the steamers. The delays were many and the arrival of mail boats irregular. "You do not know what a dearth of news is here, and how much good even two daily papers per week (half a month old at that) would do me. . . . Mail them every day or two, as the mail may be made up in N. Y. any day for Ft. Pickens. Vessels are leaving every day or two for some point this way, and the Havana steamers leave our mails at Key West whence we get them by various craft."<sup>22</sup> "We got orders yesterday quite suddenly, to send our letters to the Fort, as the Connecticut was hourly expected to touch here for a mail on her way to Key West. So I hurriedly closed up my long letter to you and sent it down [to the Fort]. I hear that she touched and got our mail in the night last night, and suppose my letter is on the way to your hands."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Near Berryville, Va., September 11, 1864.

It is rather sad to think that only 8 days later, a large number of these men were lying dead on the battlefield of Winchester, for the Seventy-fifth suffered very heavy losses in that battle, and that the writer of these letters was in the Winchester Hospital mortally wounded.

<sup>20</sup> Hampton, Va., June 6, 1861.

<sup>21</sup> Camp Hamilton, Virginia, June 14, 1861.

<sup>22</sup> Santa Rosa island, Florida, January 5, 1862. (Letter begun January 3d.)

<sup>23</sup> Santa Rosa island, Florida, February 6, 1862.



The mail bags all had to be landed through the surf and breakers, with considerable danger. "Our little mail schooner 'The Pickering' has just come in sight and a boat is already dancing over the breakers and through the surf out to board her for our letters and papers. It blows and rains like everything and I don't know as we shall get anything tonight, but if we don't we shall hardly go to bed content.

[Sunday morning] "Our hopes of a mail last night were all dashed to pieces just after dark by the return of our boat with information that the sail which we supposed to be our mail schooner was a fruit schooner from Havana, that she brought no mail and said there was no news. . . . I hear today that our little mail schooner 'The Pickering' has been lost at sea, or at least has not been heard from since she left here with our mail some three weeks ago. We sent a large mail by her, if I am not mistaken, which will be left in mid-ocean while our friends wonder why we do not write. This will interfere with the regularity of our mails, and explains why we have not had an arrival before. Such I suppose will be our luck often while on this out-of-the-way place."<sup>24</sup> "You do not know . . . what it is to see a mail already forty days old beating up towards the shore on which you are awaiting it, for a long ten hours, now driven back by the wind, now steering apparently away and now coming almost in again, struggling as if for dear life to get up to anchorage, when you have nothing to do but look on and tremble for the changes that have befallen the dear ones at home in this long silence.

"Yesterday morning before we were up we heard the cry 'Sail Ho!' and as we were crazy for news we were soon out and dressed to watch what might be in the offing for us. . . . A little sharp peering through the mist discovered to us a brigantine six or seven miles away, trying to beat up against a head wind. We had been so many times disappointed that we did not feel at all sanguine that she had mail on board of her, and yet we hardly took our eyes off from her until it was near noon when she dropped anchor. A boat soon put off from her and steered for the shore. The lookouts, the sandhills and the beach were all filled with anxious officers and soldiers and the ramparts of Pickens had a crowd of watchers. We at headquarters were

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<sup>24</sup> Santa Rosa island, Florida, February 8, 1862. (Letter begun February 6th.)

all on the lookout, with glasses, and what with fear and hope and anxiety lest the surf which was very rough and angry should dash our little messenger to pieces, it was a nervous season. At last, however, the boat touched the sand and we saw them throwing out bags on the sand. Soon two mule carts went up and loaded up with the mail. It had come!"<sup>25</sup> The letters received carried dates up to January 27th, and arrived February 16th. A week later another vessel arrived, bringing letters dated to February 4th.<sup>26</sup>

"We hear now that a mail will leave here next Tuesday March 4th, and of course our letters will reach N. Y. about the 14th or 15th of the month. You will perhaps have an idea, got in the legitimate way, how long our negligent Uncle Sam left us to wait for our last mail."<sup>27</sup> On Thursday May 8th, Major Babcock again voices the complaint over delay in getting mail at Santa Rosa island. "Our latest limits of news are now thirty days old, and two or three states may have been, probably have been, lost or won to the good cause since we heard a word." Friday evening May 9th, "We are all getting cross and testy at the delay of the mail from New York and the news by steamer from New Orleans. The probabilities now are that the Rhode Island which we have expected back for a week or more now, to take our letters to N. Y. has gone direct from the Mississippi squadron home, either with a call for reinforcements or with dispatches of success to our arms there. Even the Philadelphia which we expect hourly, may have been detained and diverted to the service of the more important operations in Va. and our mails reach us still by some lucky accident. Well if the good cause really needs our mail facilities, satisfy us of it and we would go without them as cheerfully as any living bodies."<sup>28</sup>

In the course of the Teche campaign mail was brought by steamer to the base at Brashear City, and then came up either with the supply trains or by men detailed to go down after it. "I sent Sergt. Fish down for mails and some other matters with orders to return as soon as he can."<sup>29</sup>

"I hear that there is some danger of the capture of this mail, by guerillas on the road, but I hope none of my letters will get

<sup>25</sup> Santa Rosa island, Florida, February 17, 1862. (Letter begun February 6th.)

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, February 22, 1862. (Letter begun February 6th.)

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, February 26, 1862.

<sup>28</sup> Santa Rosa island, Florida, May 9, 1862. (Letter begun May 5th.)

<sup>29</sup> Opelousas, La., April 23, 1863.

into print in the C. S. A.”<sup>30</sup> The letters written during this period evidently were not sent by United States mail, as they carry no stamp or cancellation mark, and usually bear the inscription, “By the kindness of ——.” “Sergt. Draper goes down in the morning. . . . I send my letter by him.”<sup>31</sup>

When the Seventy-fifth was transferred to the Army of the Potomac in 1864, however, opportunities for getting letters and papers containing news of operations in other parts of the country, were greatly increased. In the camp at Tennallytown, D. C., “We get a mail every day now, and have the Washington papers early in the morning, so that we keep the run of the news.”<sup>32</sup> As the army advanced down the Shenandoah valley, the letters were delayed a little, but the newspapers arrived early. “We get the Baltimore & Phil a papers here by 3 P. M. and hear the news earlier than you do in Williamson or would in Owego [New York]. Our mails, as yet, are irregular, but we hope soon to get them into order.”<sup>33</sup> “The mail is said to be going suddenly and I must close. We have no forewarnings of arrival or departures of mail, but must scramble as we can.”<sup>34</sup>

Facilities for handling the mail for the soldiers, then, were poor, and the delivery to the various points was irregular, but the arrival of the long-expected letters formed a pleasant break in the daily life of the soldier.

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, April 25, 1863.

<sup>32</sup> Tennallytown, D. C., August 4, 1864.

<sup>33</sup> Halltown, Va., August 23, 1864.

<sup>34</sup> Near Berryville, Va., September 10, 1864. (Letter begun September 9th.)

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE "CONTRABAND" QUESTION

What to do with the negroes who escaped from their owners and fled to the Union lines was a perplexing question to be settled up to the time when President Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation, January 1, 1863, freeing the slaves in the rebellious states, by virtue of his authority as a military commander. Feeling had been growing more bitter in the North over the slavery question during the years following 1850, and the war was heralded as a means of doing away with that hated institution. "I received one [letter] . . . from Prof. Brackett who writes me rather prosily, and will not be content with this war unless it instantly abolishes slavery. . . . I am sure this slavery question will have a solution in God's own good time, and that this war will make a great change towards emancipation, but it will not, of itself, and ought not to, as I think, abolish slavery.

"In my opinion the immediate physical comfort of the slave, on the whole, would not be promoted by emancipation, and his intellectual and moral condition could hardly stand the test of so sudden and great a change. I think the change will be great, but so gradual as not to create any great convulsions."<sup>1</sup> From the plantation of a Colonel Jones near Hampton, Va., a number of slaves came to the camp of the Union army, having escaped from their master when he moved his possessions farther south upon the approach of the troops. They "are about the camps as servants and when the army goes, they will go by some means."<sup>2</sup>

Fort Pickens on Santa Rosa island, however, was the point to which the negroes fled after the outbreak of the war, from all surrounding districts, as it was for some time the only point in the extreme South which was held by federal troops, and where they could be safe. "There is a 'contraband' here who came over from the rebels a month or so since, who makes a good deal of fun for us, one 'Bony' by name. He was in our camp last night and gave in his dramatic and somewhat plaintive style, an account of his life and adventures. He gave a most graphic

<sup>1</sup> Camp Hamilton, Virginia, June 30, 1861. (Letter begun June 28th.)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, July 20, 1861.

account of his hard work for his master and how he got away. He says he worked night and day 'till his bar' foot was all bar', and he went to his Master and said, 'Massa, my foot is bar': give me pair o' shoes.' His master replied, 'I haint got no shoes Bony. I haint got no money. Massa Linkums got all de money. He smashed all de banks 'n' we got no money. You must take slip cow-hide and put strings in it and tie it on your feet.' He says his master told him, 'Massa Linkum wanted to sell all de darkies away in a foreign country.'"<sup>3</sup>

"The negro question in this Department continues to be solved as when I wrote before without fuss or nonsense. Negroes who come over to us from the rebels, as they look so much like men and women, are supposed to be in truth such. The women and children are sent to New York, where of course it is cruelly cold, but where bomb shells do not make it too hot. The men being willing to work are enrolled as Uncle Sam's laborers, paid \$15 per month and one ration per day. They are boatmen, teamsters, and ordinary hands, and do more work than any other men in the island. I do not think the 'express sanction of the government' would be deemed necessary here before a 'spelling book' would be 'presented to an intelligent negro', as Jenkins says was the case at Port Royal. Common sense is considered 'handy to have' in managing this 'countraband' business, and I do not see but what it works very well."

"Many of the poor fellows run the greatest risk and endure the greatest hardships in escaping, and from the frequent shots and alarms on the rebel lines nearest us, I presume some are shot in the attempt and some are frightened back. Bony, who is quite a character and a great favorite with us, says that as he paddled by the sentry, just as he was nearly out of sight he heard 'Who goes dar?' And then, 'I get down in de boat on my knees and I say noffin, Den I hear 'em call, "Sargent de guard! Sargent de guard!" and I *prayed to God* (solemnly) *dat if I get shot I fall in de bay and de sharks eat me up, so dey think I get away!*'"<sup>4</sup>

The capture of Pensacola by the Union troops May 10, 1862, made it much easier for the slaves to gain their freedom by taking refuge within the Federal lines. To the provost marshal fell the duty of deciding what should be done with these refugees.

<sup>3</sup> Santa Rosa island, Florida, December 29, 1861. (Letter begun December 26th.)

<sup>4</sup> W. Babcock to Harry Wells (?), Santa Rosa island, Florida, March 13, 1862.

“Negroes are now coming in from the country above, three on Thursday, one on Friday, and two today [Saturday]. One of them, ‘Robert,’ (He says they call him ‘Coon’ at home, a real slave genius, shrewd, cunning, clownish, black, and probably dishonest,) came in yesterday and told me his story, his name, age, master, business, route here etc. He belonged to one James Abercrombie 40 miles up the Escambia river, didn’t know how old he was, was raised in ‘Old Hancock’ in Georgia, had no father, brothers nor sisters, used to have a mother and one brother in Old Hancock, but hadn’t heard from them in eight years, had heard of ‘de Yankees’ and come down ‘to see’. I asked him a good many questions which he answered with constant grimaces which kept us all in a roar of laughter, but finally I put the question, ‘Have you got a wife?’ The poor fellow’s face took a sad look in an instant which touched us all. His countenance fell as he said ‘Yes, Massa,’ ‘Where is she?’ ‘She started with me, sa.’ ‘Where is she now?’ ‘De dogs ketched her, massa.’ By many questions extorting from the unwilling boy, the brief, pathetic answers, I learned that they started together. He wanted to come down first and ‘see’, but she, the faithful, loving wife, insisted on sharing his fate, and just before the horn blew for them all to be locked up for sleep, they set out with bundles in hand, and ran. They were soon missed, the dogs were set on their track, and soon overtook them. He stopped first, the dogs passed him, and seized her. He followed his brute instincts and ran the other way. How she fared and where she is, he knows not. He told this tale with such reticence, such a shrinking from details and such a quiet horror at it all, that I recognized my own kinship to his black face and distorted features. Terrible inhumanities were practiced on this place, and most monstrous indecencies which I will not disgust you by describing. We send these fugitives all to Pickens, where they are enrolled in the Qr. M. Dep’t. fed and paid as well as worked. They work well and are proud of Uncle Sam’s livery. Those who escaped to Pickens months ago now get leave to come here in good clothes with money in their pockets (the very gold and not confederate shinplasters) and form a sort of colored aristocracy, buying corn beer, strolling freely about and doing much flirtation with the colored girls.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Pensacola, Fla., Saturday, May 31, 1862. (Letter begun May 25th.)

"A few slaves still remain here in Pensacola, who ought to be free. I cannot free them. If they run away to Fort Pickens we do not return them. If they leave their masters here, we do not interfere and the city authorities may arrest and return them. One came to me whom the agent of his master wanted to hire out to one Laurence. He was not disposed to work for nothing any more. But I told him I couldn't help him, and if he didn't stop bothering me I would send him to Fort Pickens. '*I wish you would Massa!*' said he with so much unctiousness that I was quite disconcerted by the effect of my threat. I turned on my heel to go to breakfast but Carpenter lingered a minute, and I saw a significant smile on the boy's face as Carpenter said in a low tone, '*Don't you know the way to Fort Pickens?*' We went to our meal and I have not seen the boy since, nor heard of him. My official duties bind me not to advise any slave to run away, but in proper cases I find my conscience pliant enough to inform other officers what slaves might as well go to Fort Pickens and be free!"<sup>6</sup> The negroes believed that the advent of the federal troops spelled freedom for them in the city proper, and some of them refused to work any longer as slaves. Shelter was often given to fugitives from the city itself, and although legally there was nothing to prevent the city authorities or the owners from going into the army camp and trying to persuade the slaves to return, practically they were safe, since the soldiers would not have permitted any use of force to recover the runaway negroes.<sup>7</sup>

"Four black men, slaves of Capt. Harrison upon the Black-water came down here this morning. In my examination I asked the leader the stereotyped question what he came down for? '*We came down here to hunt a friend sa. 'Pears like our friends are scarce up dare!*' Sometime ago Mr. Hulburt was examining one and asked him the same question. What he came down here for? '*Cause I likes your laws down here better 'n I do de laws in Alabama,*' 'Why? What's the difference between our laws and the laws of Alabama?' said Mr Hulburt. 'Oh, dey gives us more to eat down here!' replied the discriminative darkey. This expression '*To hunt a friend*' is not uncommon with them given as a reason for coming down here, and it is

<sup>6</sup> Pensacola, Fla., June 13, 1862. (Letter begun June 9th.)

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, May 20, 1862.

always used with a sort of pathos that makes it a pleading appeal to a friend.

"I told the four who came in this morning that we were raising a battalion of black men to fight for us and asked them to join. The leader said he 'could say nothing agin that' and the others asquiesced, but finally one of them thought he shouldn't want to fight the people of Florida."<sup>8</sup>

"My theory, for a long time has been that we should treat the negro who comes to us as we would any other assistance — take it and apply it to the case in hand according to the rules of common sense. Wherever there is an army, there is a great deal of fatigue *work* to do, cutting roads, building bridges, driving teams, throwing up earth works, boating, etc., etc. For all this work, the black refugees who come within our line need no education or drill. Organize them into companies, regiments, and brigades, enroll them, pay them fair wages, and make them work. This relieves the soldier from all but strictly military duties, and his whole time and strength are available for war. This arrangement shocks no prejudices, wrongs no man, makes an economical division of labor, and employs every resource."<sup>9</sup>

In order to recapture as many of the fugitives as possible, the planters below New Orleans kept a patrol on duty, and clashes occurred between the Union outposts and this guard when negroes were pursued to the city. In one instance the leader of this force had the effrontery to come into the city and demand that the fugitives be given to him, but he was immediately seized by order of General Butler, and punished.<sup>10</sup>

Such was the method of dealing with the fugitive slave or contraband question during 1861 and 1862. Some of the men were used in actual military operations (as shown in a preceding section) through the formation of negro regiments, but the usual employment for them was the manual labor of the camp, for which they were best suited.

<sup>8</sup> Pensacola, Florida, July 29, 1862. (Letter begun July 23.)

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, July 21, 1862. (Letter begun July 12.)

<sup>10</sup> New Orleans, La., September 15, 1862.



## CHAPTER IX

### FEELING CONCERNING THE WAR

It would not be fitting to conclude this study of camp life in the Union armies during the Civil War, without devoting some attention to the expression of the feeling of the soldiers themselves toward the struggle in which they were engaged. Historians apparently believe that the war between the North and the South was inevitable, and that it might have broken out almost any time after 1850. The interests of the two sections were far apart, and each was hostile to any act which would strengthen the other's position. The firing on Fort Sumter, April 12, 1861, marked the culmination of this feeling, and the partizans of each side rushed into arms in a blaze of patriotism. "Every republican thanked God that the beginning of the end had come, and democrats looked glum."<sup>1</sup> The ministers in the pulpits preached sermons in favor of the war and volunteers came fast. "The whole town is very much excited,— all of the ministers have come out strongly — Elder Brigham said that if there were not enough without,— he would volunteer, and head his flock, deacons and all. The rest of the ministers said the same."<sup>2</sup>

Lieutenant Babcock himself had some appreciation of the seriousness of the war thus begun,<sup>3</sup> but did not believe that it would last very long.<sup>4</sup> The troops at Camp Hamilton were anxious to get into battle, for fear that they would not get an opportunity to fight. "If a few more successes like that of Gen. McClelland [*sic*] are obtained, the back of this rebellion is broken and we shall be engaged in our usual peaceful avocations by the 1st of April next as if there had been no war. I trust General Butler's ambition will not allow him to remain quiet even if we have to move short-handed. The truth is, we have not force enough here for any steady advance unless the enemy run at the sight of us which is not probable since the Great Bethel affair."<sup>5</sup> The months dragged on, however, and the war seemed to be no nearer its end. Each new victory of a Northern army

<sup>1</sup> Diary, April 13, 1861.

<sup>2</sup> Willis G. Babcock to Willoughby Babcock, Homer, N. Y., April 23, 1861.

<sup>3</sup> Albany Barracks, May 8, 1861.

<sup>4</sup> Camp Hamilton, Virginia, June 17, 1861. (Letter begun June 16th.)

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, July 18, 1861.

aroused fresh hopes that the struggle would end very shortly, only to be crushed by a Union defeat. "I really expect to see you ere the year is over, and cannot bring myself to anticipate a longer absence, though many of our officers think we shall not be home within our 'three years'." <sup>6</sup>

"We get a Pensacola paper by our deserters <sup>7</sup> which gives an account of a decisive victory by our troops in Tennessee. If true, as we hope, it is very important and two or three such victories would set our cause far ahead, and bring us some months nearer our wives and friends. We cannot hope to leave the South until the war is fairly over, and shall, I fear be among the last troops discharged. It will be a great work even to transport home 600,000 soldiers and many men must wait." <sup>8</sup> "The news today is glorious. It looks more like success. If vigorously carried on the war will approach the beginning of the end on the 1st of April. I shall be very glad if the condition of things shall be such as to allow me to resign by the 1st of August." <sup>9</sup>

Great confidence was felt in the ability of General McClellan to drive home his attack against Richmond and crush the Army of Virginia. If the southern capital was surrendered to the Union armies, the war would be practically over. <sup>10</sup> His long delay after all things were apparently in readiness caused the feeling to grow that he was not a man who could carry the operations to a successful conclusion. <sup>11</sup> Finally news came of the defeat before Richmond, after several days of conflicting rumors. "We have also a N. Y. Times of the 3rd of July, and enough seems to have become certain to assure us that the energy and military science of the South have proved superior to ours now as generally heretofore. The damnable taint of money and political influence is upon the army, and there is no such earnest working among the commanding officers as the rebels have done. One of the commonest matters of strategy is to have superior numbers at the point where serious work is possible, but McClellan has dallied eleven months away in Virginia, has had every wish

<sup>6</sup> This letter was written in February 1862 from Santa Rosa island.

<sup>7</sup> These deserters came from the Confederate army on the other side of the channel.

<sup>8</sup> Santa Rosa island, Florida, February 8, 1862. (Letter begun February 6th.)

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, February 28, 1862. (Letter begun February 26th.)

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, March 13, 1862.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, March 31, 1862. (Letter begun March 24th.)

and request gratified, has had wonderful means at his disposal, and yet has allowed the enemy to put two men to his one on the point of attack and thus beat him when defeat was as ruinous as it was unnecessary. We knew here, and he had the means of knowing, that the Army of the South dispersed at Corinth, was being sent to Richmond. He *should* have known, as a military man, the meaning of Jackson's diversion. He *should* have known the swamps of Chickahominy, and their strategic uses and difficulties. He *should* have known, very nearly, the forces around Richmond. It seems he knew nothing. All attempts to shift the blame from him to the President or to Secretary Stanton, are unjust, for there is everywhere the best evidence that he has had his own way. Chickahominy was a serious check which he need not have suffered—it was no way necessary. That taught him,—or *should* have done so,—the numbers and intentions of the rebel army. So far as appears, it taught him nothing.

“Ignorant of his enemy, careless of his surroundings, he has gone into action and come out of it 40 miles from Richmond. His officers and soldiers were heroes or they would have been utterly destroyed. Of course, I think he has been appreciated before, but the War Dept. has not been able to displace him.”<sup>12</sup>

“If McClellan has failed us in whom will the country trust? . . . We have raised armies; we have shed our best blood, poured out millions of treasure, and moved heaven and earth at the beck of this general, and he has failed us. Who promises more? Is it Halleck? He was outwitted at Corinth. Is it Hunter? He has done nothing. Fremont has at last subsided. Sumner might do, but are we sure of it?

“No. If the truth is what we fear it is, *I am for recognizing the independence of the South*. You will be surprised at this, but it is my long harbored thought, once or twice before expressed. If they have routed our army there, they deserve their independence, and have fairly won it. What is more, the common sense of the world will give it to them. It is a terrible thought, yet it is my true one. The prospect were sad indeed, but not without its great promise of good. For if the Union shall be restored, Slavery as the price of pacification, will be sustained by the strong arm of government, and may

<sup>12</sup> Pensacola, Fla., July 15, 1862. (Letter begun July 12th.)

yet linger a half century. But if there is a Southern republic, slavery is now nearly dead. It will die soon!"<sup>13</sup>

Colonel Babcock bitterly arraigns the politicians and army contractors for preventing the vigorous prosecution of the war by delaying supplies, keeping incompetent men in office, and sending out false reports of the condition of the army.<sup>14</sup>

After the failure of the generals to whom the country had looked for aid a new man had to be obtained who could cope with the situation, and that general showed himself in the capture of Vicksburg, the great fortress on the Mississippi river, July 4, 1863,—U. S. Grant. "Everything looks glorious now-a-days. Of course our greatest concern is for the Army of the Potomac, which has been the great source from which the rebels have drawn their supplies. It succeeding now, the war is nearly over. To Grant, however, should be the credit of inaugurating these magnificent successes. Banks' career has been creditable to his troops, and accomplished with small means, but his success has been accidental. Lee's rush into Maryland and Penn *a.* has been long designed, but it was the last desperate throw of a gambler and has failed signally."<sup>15</sup>

Camp Hamilton, Virginia, the position taken up by the Third regiment when it first took the field, was in the enemy's country, and the so-called Union sentiment in the district was largely assumed. July 14, 1861, "I am well satisfied that there is no real Union feeling here strong enough to overbalance the natural Southern feeling. The undercurrent of sympathy here is unmistakably Southern and we owe our friends to our strength. A Union man here is one merely who prefers the old order of things, who regrets the destruction of industry and its products by war, and who is willing the laws should be enforced if it can be done without bloodshed. If there are any more ardent Union men than this, it is because they are abolitionists at heart or are Northerners who are yet unconverted to slaveholding codes of right. One man near here took the oath of allegiance and got a pass from Gen. Butler which takes him all through our lines and into the Fort. With this he visited all around daily, went home at night like a faithful spouse, and told his wife all the particulars. She saddled the horse while he went to bed

<sup>13</sup> Pensacola, Fla., July 15, 1862. (Letter begun July 12th.)

<sup>14</sup> New Orleans, La., September 16, 1862. (Letter begun September 15th.)

<sup>15</sup> W. Babcock to "Friend Buckbee," Donaldsonville, La., July 19, 1863.

and rode over to the enemy's lines with all this useful information. I presume others have practiced the same thing, though they have not yet found themselves in *quod* as this good lady has." <sup>16</sup>

In Pensacola sentiment was divided with regard to secession. "I have become acquainted with Judge Wright a good deal, and I find him a most scrupulous, high-minded gentleman. He is a lawyer and judge, about sixty years of age, intelligent and intellectual, used to the world, and the soul of honor. He has always opposed and denounced secession, yet regards the secession of his state as having carried *him* out of the United States. He would not take the oath of allegiance to the Confederate States and says he would have suffered banishment before he would have done it. He will not renew his allegiance to the United States — though he has not been asked to do so. He has one son now at home and three in the rebel army. . . .

"The families of Judge Wright and his son, of Merritt & Cozzens, the other two men arrested at Oakfield are the only ones really representing the respectability of this city that I have come in contact with. Some of them are for Secession, some for Union. The secessionists hate us, and will continue to hate us. The Union people, few and rare, will not affiliate with us for two reasons: one is, they fear to do so, lest we retire from here and leave them to the tender mercies of the rebel friends hereabouts; the other is, they have sons and brothers in the rebel service who will call them renegades, apostates, traitors. Judge Wright said to me that it would hardly be honest to cultivate intimacy with one whose duty it would be tomorrow to slay his sons. Yet he says, and all these men say, that our conciliatory course here is fast gaining us friends and that we are stronger every day." <sup>17</sup>

The good conduct of the Union soldiers helped to do away with the bitter hostility of the leading people in the city, and social intercourse grew between the officers and these families. "Nobody now stays at home out of spite toward us, and the list of ladies who attend the ministrations of Father Nash of the 6th Regt. comprises many pretty ones." <sup>18</sup> The Confederate papers, however, were "full to the very brim with the most

<sup>16</sup> Camp Hamilton, Virginia, July 16, 1861. (Letter begun July 14th.)

<sup>17</sup> Pensacola, Fla., May 31, 1862. (Letter begun May 25th.)

<sup>18</sup> Pensacola, Fla., August 3, 1862.

bloody and inflammatory appeals to passion and vengeance." "It is a desperate struggle, desperately conducted by the South. Many of them, especially the women and old men, are for fighting it out to the bitter end of destroying everything and dying on the ruins."<sup>19</sup>

It is difficult 50 years afterwards, to appreciate fully the conditions under which the soldiers lived during this bitter struggle between the North and the South, camping on low ground, out in all kinds of weather, without protection from fever and sickness and ever in danger of attack by regular forces or guerrillas. Gallantly the men did their duty through the long years of fighting; and perhaps this study of conditions as shown by the letters of an officer who was a close observer for three years, may help to give an understanding of the intimate details of the life they led.

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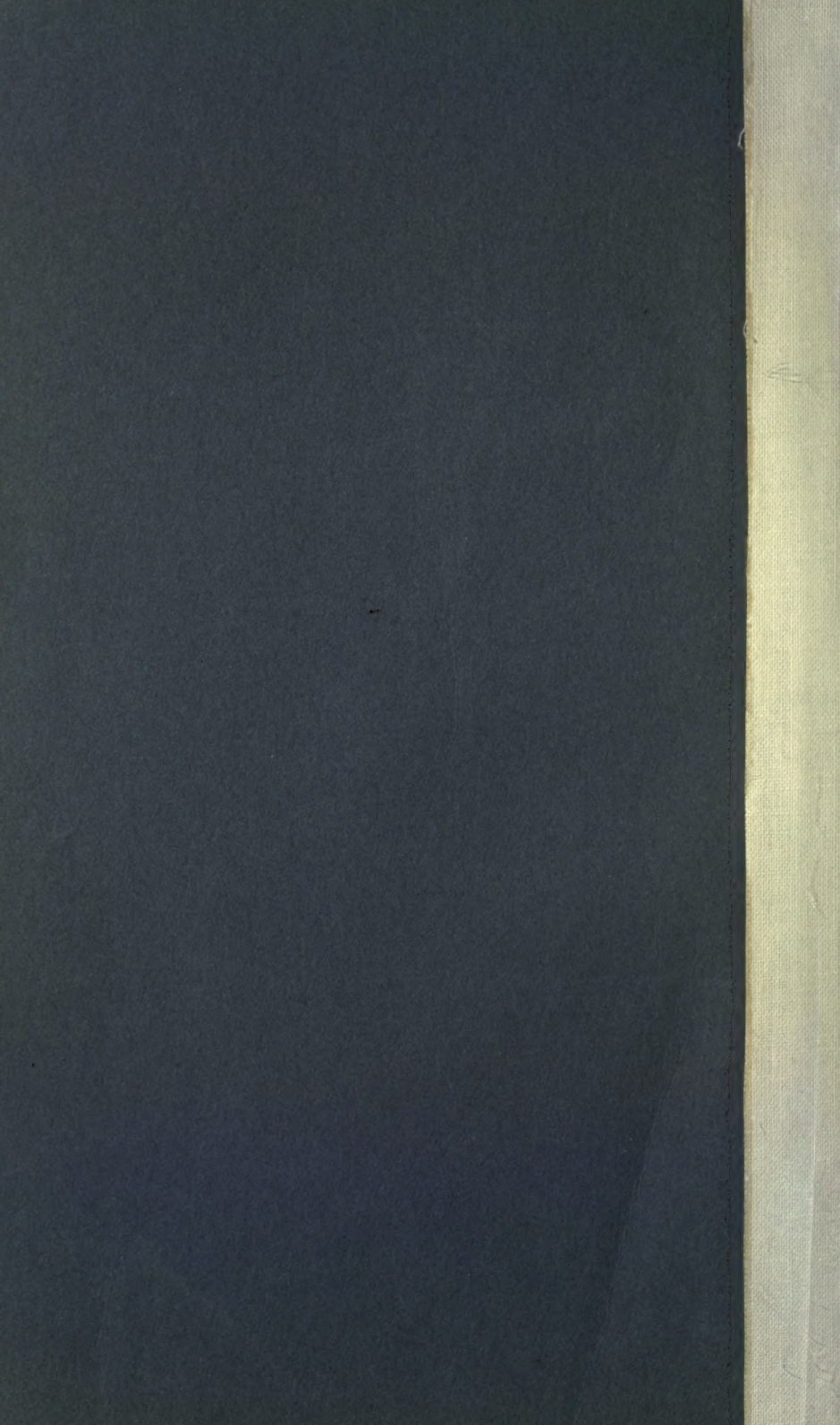
<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, July 24, 1862. (Letter begun July 23d.)











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